ARNO C.
GAEBELEIN

The ACTS of the Apostles

An Exposition

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By ARNO C. GAEBELEIN

A thorough, clear presentation, typical of Dr. Gaebelein's expository works.

Contents:

Introduction

Relationship to Exodus in the Old Testament

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Contents and Scope of Acts

The Division of the Book:

Chapters 1-7—Historical Account

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"Dr. Arno C. Gaebelein, the founder of *Our Hope* magazine and one of the original editors of the Scofield Reference Bible, was known for his fidelity to the Scriptures and his profound knowledge of the prophetic Word. As an able expositor of the Bible, Dr. Gaebelein always stressed the dispensational aspect of its interpretation. His *Acts of the Apostles* shows clearly that the Church was born when the Holy Spirit was given on the Day of Pentecost, and reveals the Spirit's power, not only to work miracles but to guide the thinking of the apostles in the transition from Judaism to Christianity."

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THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

An Exposition

by

ARNO C. GAEBELEIN

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FOREWORD.

Judaism and Christianity; Legalism and Grace; the Kingdom and the Church; these are in contrast, at poles apart, and defy all attempts at reconciliation. Ishmael—"the wild-ass man"—untamed and untamable, the son of the bond woman, is unalterably opposed to Isaac—"laughter"—spontaneous and obedient, the son of the free woman.

These distinctions, known and observed, are of incalculable worth in Bible Study.

In The Book of the Acts there is revealed the passing of Judaism, and the incoming of Christianity: wherein we see how the old wine-skins of legalism are without strength to restrain the expansive spirit of the new wine of grace. This Book of the Acts, showing as it does the transition of Judaism to Christianity, is, therefore, of absorbing interest; and Mr. Gaebelein, whose oral teaching is so abundantly owned and blessed of God, has, in this volume of interpretative study, extended the sphere of his ministry to multitudes that may never come within range of the hearing of his voice.

The author's breadth of conception of God's plan of the Ages stamps the book with a peculiar value; while, at the same time, there is of the spiritual application of truth a thorough and clear perception that pervades and illumines the exposition of the text.

From the study of this book, so untrammeled by the yoke of traditional interpretation, so far removed from the feverish discontent with the supernatural, so different from the cold and critical analysis of the casuist, so reverent, and so unalterably loyal to the plenary inspiration of the Scripture, one rises in spirit refreshed, in faith strengthened, and to new endeavor encouraged. It is a pleasure and a privilege to commend this book.

FORD C. OTTMAN,

Stamford, Conn.

INTRODUCTION.

The book known by the name "The Acts of the Apostles"* follows the four Gospel records. This is its proper place. The books of the New Testament have been correctly divided into five sections, corresponding to the first five books, with which the Bible begins, that is the Pentateuch. The four Gospels are the **Genesis** of the New Testament. Here we have the great beginning, the foundation upon which the subsequently revealed christian doctrines rest. The Book of Acts is the **Exodus,** God leads out from bondage a heavenly people and delivers them. It is the great historical book of the New Testament describing the beginning of the church on earth. The Pauline Epistles are the **Leviticus** portion. Holiness unto the Lord, the believers separation and standing in Christ, what believers have and are in Christ by whose blood they have redemption, is the core truth of these Epistles. The Epistles of Peter, James, John and Jude, known by the name of the Catholic Epistles, are for the wilderness journey of God's people, telling us of trials and suffering; these correspond to the Book of **Numbers.** The Book of Revelation in which God's ways are rehearsed and a review is given of the entire prophetic Word concerning the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of God has the same character as **Deuteronomy.**

By whom was this Book written? There is no doubt that the writer of the third Gospel record is the one whom the

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*The oldest Manuscript, the *Sinaiticus* dating from the 4th century gives the title simply as "The Acts," which is, no doubt, the better name for the book.

Holy Spirit selected to write this account of the establishment of the Church on earth and the events connected with it. This becomes clear if we read the beginning of that Gospel and compare it with the beginning of Acts. The writer in the third Gospel says: "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent *Theophilus*, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luke i:3-4). The Acts of the Apostles begin: "The *former* treatise have I made, O *Theophilus*, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." The former treatise known to Theophilus is the third Gospel, called the Gospel of Luke. The writer of that Gospel is also the penman of the Book of Acts. Though we do not find Luke's name mentioned in the Gospel nor in the second Book he was entrusted to write, there is no doubt that he wrote them both. We find his name mentioned a number of times in the Epistles and these references give us the only reliable information we have. In Colossians iv:14 we read of him as "the beloved physician." In the Epistle of Philemon he is called a fellow laborer of the Apostle Paul, and from the last Epistle the great Apostle wrote, the Second Epistle of Timothy, we learn that Luke was in Rome with Paul and was faithful to him, while others had forsaken the prisoner of the Lord. From Colossians iv we also may gather that he was not a Jew, but a Gentile, for with the eleventh verse Paul had mentioned those of the circumcision. Epaphras was one of the Colossians, a Gentile, and then follow the names of Luke and Demas, both of them undoubtedly Gentiles. The reason that the Holy Spirit selected a Gentile to write the Gospel which pictures our Lord as the Man and the Savior and the Book of Acts, is as obvious as it is interesting. Israel had rejected God's gift and the glad news of salvation is now to go to the Gentiles. The Gospel of Luke addressed

by a Gentile to a Gentile (Theophilus) is the Gospel for the Gentiles and Luke the Gentile was chosen to give the history of the Gospel going forth from Jerusalem to the Gentiles.

There are numerous internal evidences which show likewise that the writer of the third Gospel is the instrument through whom the Book of Acts was given. For instance, there are about fifty peculiar phrases and words in both books which are rarely found elsewhere; they prove the same author for those two books.

Then we learn from the Book of Acts that Luke, the beloved physician, was an eyewitness of some of the events recorded by him in this book. He joined the Apostle during his second missionary journey at Troas (chapt. xiv:10). This evidence is found in the little word "*we*." The writer was now in company of the Apostle, whose fellow laborer he was. He went with Paul to Macedonia and remained sometime in Philippi. He was Paul's fellow traveler to Asia and Jerusalem (ch. xxi:17). He likewise was with him in his imprisonment in Caesarea and then on to Rome. There is no doubt that Luke had completely written and sent forth the Book of the Acts of the Apostles at the end of the two years mentioned in Acts xxviii:30, though the critics claim a much later period.

The contents and scope of the Book. The first verse gives us an important hint. The former treatise, the Gospel of Luke, tells "that Jesus **began** to do and teach." The Book of Acts contains therefore the continuation of the Lord's actions no longer on earth but from the Glory. The actions of the risen and glorified Christ can easily be traced throughout the entire book. We give a few illustrations. In Chapter I He acts in the selection of the twelfth Apostle, who was to take the place of Judas. In Chapter II He himself poured forth the Holy Spirit, for Peter made the

declaration: "therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, *He* has poured out this which ye behold and hear." And in the close of the second chapter we behold another action of the risen Lord: "the Lord added to the assembly daily those that were to be saved." In the third chapter He manifested His power in the healing of the lame man. Throughout this book we behold Him acting from the Glory, guiding, directing, comforting and encouraging His servants. These beautiful and manifold evidences of Himself being with His own and manifesting His power in their behalf we hope to trace in our exposition of the different chapters.

Then on the very threshold of the book we have the historical account of the coming of that other Comforter, whom the Lord had promised, the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, came. His coming marks the birthday of the Church. After that event we see Him present with and in His people. In connection with the Lord's servants, in filling them, guiding them, fitting them, sustaining them in trials and persecutions as well as in the affairs of the church, we behold the actions of the Holy Spirit on earth. He is the great administrator in the church. Over fifty times we find Him mentioned, so that some have called this book "the Acts of the Holy Spirit." While we have no doctrines about the Holy Spirit and His work in the Acts of the Apostles, we find here the practical illustrations of the doctrine found elsewhere in the New Testament.

In the third place another supernatural Being is seen acting in this book. It is the enemy, Satan, the hinderer and the accuser of the brethren. We behold him coming upon the scene and acting through his different instruments either as the roaring lion or as the cunning deceiver with his wiles. Wherever he can, he attempts to hinder the

progress of the Gospel. This is a most important aspect of this book and indeed very instructive. Aside from the human instruments prominent in this Book of Acts, we behold three supernatural Beings acting. The risen, glorified Christ, the Holy Spirit and Satan.

Another hint about the contents of this book and its scope we find at the close of the Gospel of Luke. There the risen Christ said: "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name to all the nations beginning at Jerusalem." In the first chapter of Acts the Spirit of God reports the commission of the Lord, about to ascend, in full. "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." The Book of Acts shows us how this mission beginning in Jerusalem was carried out. The witness begins in the city where our Lord was crucified. Once more an offer was made to the nation Israel. Then we behold the Gospel going forth from Jerusalem and all Judea to Samaria and after that to the Gentiles, and through the chosen Apostle of the Gentiles it is heralded in the different countries of the Roman empire. The parable of our Lord in Matthew xxii:1–10 gives us prophetically the history of these events. First the guests were called to the wedding and they would not come. This was the invitation given by the Lord to His earthly people when He moved among them. They received Him not. Then came a renewed offer with the assurance that all things are ready. This is exactly what we find in the beginning of the Book of Acts. Once more to Jerusalem and to the Jewish nation is offered the kingdom, and signs and miracles take place to show that Jesus is the Christ risen from the dead. In the above parable our Lord predicted what the people would do with the servants, who bring the second offer. They would ignore the message and treat the servants spitefully and kill them. This we find fulfilled in the persecu-

tion which broke out in Jerusalem, when Apostles were imprisoned and others were killed. The Lord also predicted in His parable the fate of the wicked city. It was to be burned. Thus it happened with Jerusalem. And after the second offer had been rejected the servants were to go to the highways to invite the guests. And this stands for the invitation to go out to the Gentiles.

Jerusalem is in the foreground of this book, for the beginning was to be in Jerusalem "to the Jew first." The end of the book takes us to Rome and we see the great Apostle a prisoner there, a most significant, prophetic circumstance.

The division of the Book. The division of the Book of the Acts is very simple. We divide it into three parts.

I. Chapters I-VII. These chapters give us the historical account of the beginning in Jerusalem, the renewed testimony to the nation concerning Jesus as the Christ and the Kingdom. The seventh chapter, the stoning of Stephen, closes that testimony.

II. Chapters VIII-XII. These chapters mark a transition period. The Gospel goes forth to Samaria. Saul of Tarsus sees the Lord and is converted. Peter goes and preaches the Gospel to the Gentiles. Peter is cast into prison and miraculously delivered.

In these two parts Peter is in the foreground. He does most of the preaching and acting. He used the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven in the second chapter by preaching to the Jews and in the tenth chapter by preaching to the Gentiles.

III. Chapters XIII-XVIII. These chapters contain the inspired accounts of the travels and labors of the Apostle Paul, the proclamation of the Gospel in the different lands and the events and circumstances connected with it. His

journey to Rome and abode there closes the book. Another division as given by Bengel in his Gnomen is also good.

I. Pentecost, with preceding events. Ch. I, II.

II. Acts in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria among the circumcised. Ch. III–IX, XII.

III. Acts in Caesarea and admission of Gentiles. Ch. X, XI.

IV. First Journey among the Gentiles. Ch. XIII, XIV.

V. The deputation and council in Jerusalem. Ch. XV.

VI. Second Journey of Paul. XVI–XIX.

VII. Journey to Jerusalem and Rome. XIX:21–XXVIII.

In closing these brief introductory remarks to this great book we wish to say that the careful study of its contents is very needful at the present time. It will take us back to the beginning and show us the path which the Lord has marked out for His church on earth. In the light of this book we shall discover the dark picture of the present day confusion and departure from God and from His Word. There is much comfort and direction for the faithful remnant of God's people living in our days in this book. There is much earnest exhortation to greater faithfulness, to more holy boldness in preaching the Gospel and standing up for the faith, which comes to us from this book. Most blessed it is to follow the Holy Spirit in His work in, upon and with the believer. With the gracious help of our Lord and the help of His Spirit we hope to touch upon all these blessed phases, and we are confident that He will make the closer study of the Acts of the Apostles a blessing to our readers as well as to the writer.

CHAPTER I.

The opening chapter of this book gives the events which preceded the great day of Pentecost. However, of the many things which must have transpired in Jerusalem during the fifty days between the resurrection day and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit not all are mentioned in this chapter. Here, as in the great historical books of the Old Testament and in the Gospels, only certain events are reported while others are passed over. Not man but God by His Spirit arranged the matter to give us more than a mere historical account of what took place. As the Book of Exodus in its history foreshadows spiritual and dispensational truths, so, as we shall find, does this New Testament Exodus book teach spiritual and dispensational lessons.

The events preceding Pentecost written in this first chapter are:

I. An account of events preceding the ascension of the Lord, the ascension itself and the message of His personal, visible and glorious return. Verses 1–11.

II. The waiting company in prayer. Matthias added to the Apostles in the place of Judas. Verses 12–26.

I. Verses 1–3. The first three verses of the chapter form the introduction.

> The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

As shown in the introduction the first verse proves that Luke, the beloved physician, the writer of the Gospel of Luke, was the chosen instrument to write the Book of Acts. Theophilus (Friend of God) is as prominent in the beginning of the Acts as he is in the Gospel of Luke, where he is addressed as " most excellent." From a reliable source dating back to the second century we learn that he was an influential and wealthy man residing in the city of Antioch. He dedicated his magnificent palace, called a Basilica, to the preaching of the Gospel. Luke came most likely also from Antioch. He may have belonged to the household of Theophilus. It is not unlikely that Luke had received great kindness from Theophilus; some claim that he used to be a slave and became through Theophilus a free man. That both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts are addressed to Theophilus does not mean that these discourses (the word used in the original) were meant for Theophilus alone. Luke addressed Theophilus as a prominent man, a responsible person, whose name bespeaks close walk with God, and through him to that assembly to which Theophilus belonged, and in a larger sense to all the Gentile-Christian churches.

According to the address to Theophilus we have in the Gospel of Luke the beginning of what Christ did and taught and therefore in Acts a continuation of these. He began on earth and now the scene is changed. He is the Man in Glory and from there He continues His work.

It is beautiful to see how the Lord Jesus is brought to our view in these few sentences with which this book opens. How this manifests the One who guided the pen of the beloved physician, that is the Holy Spirit. Seven things are mentioned concerning our Lord. 1. His earthly life of doing and teaching. 2. He charged His Apostles by the Holy Spirit. 3. He was taken up. 4. He had suffered. 5. Presented Himself living with many proofs. 6. He was seen

by them for forty days. 7. He spoke of the things which concern the Kingdom of God. What an array of wonderful facts we find in these few sentences! The fact of His resurrection after His passion is the leading feature of the passage. It must be necessarily so for His resurrection is the great foundation upon which the Gospel and the Church rests. He presented Himself living with many proofs and was seen by them for forty days. It is only here in this passage that the period of time during which He manifested Himself is mentioned. And during that time the "many proofs" were given. He appeared in their midst; He walked with them, ate with them, they touched His body, His hands and feet, and they found He was not an apparition, but had a body of flesh and bones. Blessed fact, He presented Himself living, He is the living One! That He thus showed Himself with many proofs is beyond controversy. But these forty days are likewise shrouded in mystery. It is easy to make fanciful applications of these forty days and to teach unscriptural doctrines by such applications. For instance, a widespread evil system which denies some of the fundamentals of the faith, holds that the Lord is *now* present on the earth as He was present for forty days after His resurrection. According to this teaching (Russellism or Miliennial Dawn) He came in a secret manner in 1874 and is to remain here for forty years, when He will reveal Himself. Such teaching, if it can be called that, lacks all scriptural support. During these forty days, a number which stands for testing, He not only showed Himself, but also spoke of the things which concern the Kingdom of God. The words He gave them at these occasions, the instructions they received from His lips are not reported to us.

The verses which follow describe the farewell meeting, His last words to His disciples, the ascension of the Lord, and the promise of His return to earth.

> And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which *saith he*, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Verses 4-11.)

This occurred ten days before the day of Pentecost. Their place was to be in Jerusalem and to wait in that city for the promise of the Father, which they had heard from His lips. He had given them this promise, when He talked to them before His death, as written in the Gospel of John. The same command to remain in the city is found at the close of the Gospel of Luke as well as the fact that the promise of the Father was soon to be fulfilled. Then He refers to John and his baptism with water, that they were to be baptized with the Holy Spirit; the " fire " of which John spoke (Matthew iii:12) the Lord does not mention, because the baptizing with fire does not refer to the day of Pentecost, but to the time when: "He shall gather His wheat into the garner and burn the chaff with fire unquenchable;" that is, His second coming. He announced once more the " other Comforter " who was to come to be with them and in them. All this we shall follow in detail when we come to the great second chapter in our study of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Here we only wish to add that the waiting of the

disciples for the promise of the Father remaining in Jerusalem for ten days cannot be repeated now. Often people, well meaning and spiritually-minded, have appointed meetings for days of waiting and prayer that " the promise of the Father " might be given to them. Such expectations are out of order. The Father has kept His promise, the Holy Spirit has come. To ask the Father now to keep His promise amounts to the same thing as to ask God to *make* peace by the death of Christ. Peace has been made; the Holy Spirit has been given.

And now we hear the assembled disciples addressing the Lord. What blessed intercourse they had with Him! He spoke to them in all His former tenderness and sympathy and they could ask Him their questions. And so He is still accessible for His own who draw dear to Him. "Lord, is it at this time that Thou restorest the kingdom to Israel? " This was their question, and a very natural question it was for them to ask. They were still Jews and knew only the earthly kingdom as their hope. He had risen from the dead and to their minds this must be the time in which the kingdom is restored to Israel.

Frequently the inquiry of these men who had believed in Jesus and followed Him is declared to have been prompted by ignorance and selfishness. They were, so it is said, still expecting an earthly kingdom, to be established in the land with Jerusalem as the center; they were not yet delivered from their Jewish ideas. Others tell us that at the time they asked this question, they were ignorant of the true meaning of the kingdom. According to these interpreters the kingdom is the New Testament Church; the Holy Spirit swept away these earthly kingdom expectations. Such and similar reasons have been given to explain the question of the disciples.

It has occurred to but a few that this question was perfectly in order for them as Jews, which they were still, and

did not emanate from ignorance, but was asked by reason of their superior knowledge of God's purposes as revealed in the Old Testament, a knowledge which is so sadly lacking in the present-day professing church.

The Lord does not rebuke their supposed ignorance nor does He tell them that they were mistaken. "And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath placed in His own authority." This answer approves the subject of their question. The Kingdom is to be restored, the times and the seasons were not then to be revealed, for the Father hath put these in His own power.

And this answer is most instructive. In connection with the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, the establishment of the theocratic kingdom on earth, as promised by God's holy prophets, times and seasons are expressly stated, and the declaration was made that at the time of the end, preceding the coming of the kingdom, the wise should understand (Daniel xii:10). But the Lord does not here, as He did in His Olivet discourse, direct their attention to Daniel. "For *you* it is not to know the times or the seasons." A better hope, a heavenly hope was to be theirs, and in connection with that blessed hope of the Coming of the Lord for His Saints to bring them not to Palestine and given them an earthly kingdom, but into the Father's House in Glory, there are no "times or seasons" revealed. For His Saints He may come at any time. These disciples were soon to be formed into the one body, the church, by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Lord anticipating this gave them this answer. It pointed them away from the earthly Hope of the Kingdom. Others in the future, Jewish disciples once more, a faithful remnant of Israelites, called after the completed church has left this earthly scene, will surely know the times and the seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

Once more He announces their great mission, and that before they could be such witnesses they were to receive power by the Coming of the Holy Spirit upon them. Such was the case on the day of Pentecost as we shall find when we reach the events of that day.

One verse only gives us the account of the ascension of our Lord, His Return to the Father. He was taken up, they beholding, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. What a spectacle this must have been! He in whom they had believed, in whose company they had been, to whose loving, tender words they had listened, whom they had forsaken when the hour of His suffering had come; He who had died on a cross, reckoned among the evil-doers, who had rested in a tomb and was raised from the dead by the power of God; He who had been with them in a glorified human body and manifested Himself in His resurrection glory and power during the forty days was now taken up, "received into Glory." Gradually He must have been lifted out of their midst. Lovingly His eyes must have rested upon them while their eyes beheld only Him. Now He is lifted higher and still they behold Him in human form. And then a cloud received Him out of their sight. The Greek verb used is "to take in;" so that it reads literally, "And then a cloud took Him in out of their sight." This cloud surrounded Him, and the last they saw of Him was that He disappeared from their view in this human glorified body in a cloud.

And that cloud was not a cloud of vapor. It was the same cloud which had appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Shekinah. It was the same cloud of glory which had filled Solomon's temple, which so often in Israel's past history had appeared as the outward sign of Jehovah's presence with his people. The Glory-cloud came to take Him in, to bring Him back to the Father from whence He had come. What human tongue or pen can picture what took place after He had disappeared from human vision! The Shek-

inah cloud had come to meet Him and where that Glory began sight ceases and faith begins. What must it have been when He came into the presence of the Throne of His Father when He took His seat, greeted with the word of welcome: "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec—sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." What a glorious scene it must have been participated in by the angels in heaven! And now He is back with the Father. In His Name we can approach God; He is our Advocate, our Priest in the presence of God, appearing for His own. The evidence that He is thus with the Father is soon given by the answered prayer of the first chapter, and the greater evidence, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Coming of the third person of the Trinity.

We must not overlook the teaching of one great truth assailed so much in our times by higher critics and infidels. The Lord Jesus Christ passed through the heavens with a real human glorified body, a body of flesh and bones and went with that body to a literal place, the throne of God, where He sat down and where He is now "the Man" in the Glory. The denial of this fact, so universal in our day, strikes at the very foundation of the Gospel, our salvation and our heavenly Hope. This great truth that the Lord left bodily His own and bodily returned to the Father is indisputably seen in this account of His ascension. May His person, His ascension and bodily presence in Glory be as real to our hearts, dear readers, as it must have been to the hearts of the eye-witnesses of this great event.

The cloud had taken Him in and still they were gazing into heaven. It was because they had still a vision of that cloud; "as He was going." The verb used in the original indicates this. They could not take their eyes away from that bright spot where He was, their Saviour, their Lord, their Hope, their All in All. This upward look should have been the attitude of the church. Two heavenly visitors ap-

pear now upon the scene and they give utterance to that familiar promise of His Second Coming, which establishes that great event beyond the shadow of a doubt. "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld Him going into heaven." Could human language make it any plainer? It seems almost impossible that any intelligent human being could not grasp the simple fact of His return, personal, visible and glorious, as revealed in this angelic message. The same glory cloud will bring Him back, yea even to the same place, for Zechariah tells us that "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives" (chapter xiv:4).

However, we must beware of confounding this event given here with that blessed Hope, which is the Hope of the church. The Coming of the Lord is His visible Coming as described in the prophetic books of the Old Testament; it is His coming to establish His rule upon the earth. It is the event spoken of in Daniel vii:14 and Rev. i:7. When He comes in like manner as He went up, His Saints come with Him (Col. iii:4; 2 Thess. i:10). The Hope of the church is to meet Him in the air and not to see Him coming in the clouds of heaven. The coming here "in like manner" is His Coming for Israel and the nations. The Coming of the Lord for His Church before His visible and glorious Manifestation, is revealed in 1 Thess. iv:16–18. It is well to keep these important truths in mind. Confusion between these is disastrous. He left them to enter into the Holy of Holies, to exercise the priesthood which Aaron exercised on the day of atonement, though our Lord is a priest after the order of Melchisedec. And when this promise of the two men in white garments is fulfilled, He will come forth to be a priest upon His throne.

II. The waiting company in prayer. Matthias added to the Apostles in the place of Judas.

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son* of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother* of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. (Verses 12-14.)

With what emotions they must have left the blessed spot from which the Lord had visibly gone to the Father! And now we behold them in a waiting attitude. Obedient to the command of their Lord they tarry in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. Their waiting was unique as a company of disciples, believers in Jesus as the Christ. They were not the church. Ten days after the promise of the Father came, the Holy Spirit was poured out. Ever since He is here. There is no need of waiting now for the promise of the Father. No company of believers in this age could ever be again in the position in which the disciples were before Pentecost. It is, therefore, incorrect and unscriptural to hold prayer meetings, as stated before, waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Persons who expect a repetition of what took place on Pentecost, who pray for and expect another sending of the Holy Spirit are on unscriptural ground.

We see the disciples gathered in an upper chamber. This was not in the temple, but in a private house. Perhaps it was the same room, which is mentioned in the Gospel of John. Such rooms of good size were used by Hebrews for prayer and meditations. They do so still and have large assembly rooms for prayer (Beth Midrash) in private houses in different cities. The expression "upper room" is used

often in talmudical writings. Peter's name is put in the first place, as he appears in the foreground throughout the first part of this book. After the names of the disciples are given and that they gave themselves with one accord to continual prayer the fact is mentioned that the women were present likewise. These, no doubt, are the same mentioned in Luke viii: 2–3. They are mentioned not by name. Last of all appears Mary the mother of Jesus and His brethren. That the Holy Spirit gives the name of Mary the mother of Jesus, is most significant. It reminds us of the whole story of the incarnation and the blessed life of Him, the Son of God, who came of a woman, Mary, the virgin of prophecy (Isaiah vii: 14). But the significance is in the fact that she, who was chosen by God's grace to be the blessed vessel, through whom the Creator, the Son of God, entered in human form the world He had created, is mentioned here in company with the other waiting disciples. She has no place of superiority among them, but with the rest, waited for the promise of the Father; when the Holy Spirit was poured forth she too was baptized by the one Spirit into the one body of which through the Grace of God, she is a member like any other believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. She was fallible and sinful like every other person, and all which a corrupt form of Christianity has made of her is wicked teaching. Not once is she mentioned after this chapter in the Book of Acts. In vain do we look for her name in the Epistles, in which the Holy Spirit reveals christian doctrine and privileges. Mary, the mother of Jesus, has absolutely no relation to the redemption work of the Son of God. Then the brethren of our Lord are mentioned, the same, who with Mary, their mother, attempted to interfere with the ministry of our Lord (Mark iii: 21–31–35). Not one of these was an apostle. It is positively stated that up to a certain point His brethren did not believe in Him. "For neither did His brethren believe in Him" (John vii: 5). How they believed later we do not

know. Their presence in the waiting company shows that they had believed.

> And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about a hundred and twenty,) Men *and* brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called, in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein; and, His bishoprick let another take. (Verses 15-20.)

On a certain day, which is not mentioned, the number of the disciples present were one hundred and twenty. This however, was not by any means the whole number of believers before Pentecost. We read elsewhere that the risen Christ had appeared to about five hundred brethren at once (1 Cor. xv: 6). These no doubt belonged to Galilee. On that day before Pentecost, Peter arose in the midst of the one hundred and twenty and addressing them as brethren, laid before them the sad case of Judas, who had been numbered among the twelve apostles. The awful fate of Judas is mentioned once more. There is no discrepancy between Matthew's account and the words here. He committed suicide by hanging, and the rope broke, and the terrible thing happened, which is reported here. The Apostle Peter, in bringing the case before the disciples, quotes the Word of God in a most remarkable way, which shows its inspiration.

The question arises at once about the legitimacy of Peter's action. Was it right to act in this way? Was he authorized to address the assembled company and propose the addition of another apostle in the place of Judas? Or was his action

another evidence of his impulsiveness, wholly wrong? We are aware that some good brethren, teachers of the Bible, declare that Peter made a mistake. They tell us that this action was not according to the mind of the Lord. They assert furthermore, that not Matthias, but Paul, should have been the Apostle in the place of Judas.

We do not agree at all with their teaching. Peter and the gathered company did not make a mistake. He acted by inspiration and what they did was not only according to the mind of the risen Christ, according to the Word of God, but it was a manifestation of Christ in their midst. It was the Lord who added Matthias to the twelve. To say that Paul was meant to be the twelfth apostle is a *great* blunder. Paul's apostleship is entirely different from that of the men, who were called to this office by our Lord, in connection with His earthly ministry. Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles and received from the risen and glorified Christ the double ministry, that of the Gospel, which he called "my Gospel" and the ministry of the church. Not till Israel's failure had been fully demonstrated in the stoning of Stephen, was Saul of Tarsus called to his apostleship. Furthermore twelve apostles were necessary. Twelve is the number denoting earthly government. Inasmuch as there was to be given another witness to Jerusalem after the ascension of our Lord, a national witness, a second offer of the Kingdom (Acts iii: 19, 20) twelve apostles were necessary as a body of witnesses to the nation. If only eleven apostles had stood up on the day of Pentecost, it would not have been in harmony with the divine plan and order. How strange it would have sounded if the record said "but Peter standing up with the *ten*" instead of "with the eleven" (Chapter ii: 14). Twelve had to stand up on Pentecost to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, therefore another one had to be added *before* that day. Besides this, there is positive proof that the Holy Spirit indorsed the action of the disciples in the upper room.

In 1 Corinthians xv: 5 the Holy Spirit mentions the *twelve*, who saw the Lord, to whom He appeared. Paul then is mentioned apart from the twelve; he saw the Lord in glory as one born out of due season (Verse 8).

A closer examination of the record of their action shows that the Lord guided them in this matter. Peter begins by quoting scripture. He does it in a way which clearly proves that he was guided by the Lord. "The Scriptures should be fulfilled" is what Peter said. How different from the Peter in Matthew xvi when he took the Lord aside and said after he had announced His coming death, "far be it from Thee." He had then no knowledge of the Scriptures. Repeatedly it is said that they knew not the Scriptures and that their eyes were holden. Here, however, he begins with the Scriptures. Surely this was the right starting point, and thus ordered by the Lord. He quotes from the Psalms. Part of Psalm lxix: 25 and Psalm cix: 8 are given by him as the foundation of the purposed action. These Psalms are prophetic of the events, which had taken place. The Lord Himself had opened his understanding as well as that of the other disciples. In Luke xxiv we read that He spoke of what was written in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms. "Then He opened their understanding to understand the Scripture" (Luke xxiv: 46). It was a gift of the risen Lord and here Peter guided by the Spirit of God uses the prophetic Word. All the company is one with Him in the undertaking. It must be done. The Lord moved them in this matter.

> Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. (Verses 21-22.)

Here he defines the qualification of an apostle. He must be a witness of the resurrection of Christ as well as of what He said and did in His earthly ministry.

> And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. (Verses 23-26.)

How simple it all is! How can anyone say that they erred in this action! Two are selected. Then they prayed; no doubt Peter led in audible prayer. And the prayer is a model of directness and simplicity. They address the Lord and believe that He had made a choice already. What they pray for is that the one chosen by Him may now be made known by Himself. The lot was perfectly legitimate for them to use. The Scriptures speak of it. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. xvi: 33). As they were still on Old Testament ground, it was perfectly right for them to resort to the lot. It, however, would be wrong for us to do it now. We have His complete Word, and the Holy Spirit to reveal His will. The Lord selects Matthias. His name means "the gift of the Lord." Thus the Lord gave him his place. The Apostolate complete, all was in readiness for the great day of Pentecost.

CHAPTER II.

A chapter of great importance is before us. Never was its closest and prayerful study so needed as in our days. Most of God's people are ignorant of that which God in His Grace did on the day of Pentecost; they know little of the exact meaning of the great event, which took place and their share and part in it as believers. This lack of knowledge is often responsible for all the fads and fanciful interpretations we meet about us.

We divide this chapter into five parts.

I. **The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit** (Verses 1–4).

II. **The immediate effect of His Presence** (Verses 5–15).

III. **Peter's address** (Verses 14–36).

IV. **The result of the delivered testimony** (Verses 37–41).

V. **The gathered company in fellowship** (Verses 42–47).

Before we take up the first part and study the text, we desire to make a few general remarks on the great historical event, the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. What took place on that memorable day and what was accomplished? First of all the promise of the Father as well as of the Son was accomplished. It is familiar to every reader of the New Testament that John the Baptist had witnessed concerning Him who was to baptize them with the Holy Spirit (Matthew iii). The Lord also had spoken repeatedly to His disciples about the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Luke xi we read His words: "If therefore ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much rather shall

the Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" This promise related to the future. In John vii: 37–39 we read: "In the last, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit, which they that believed on Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified." The promised Spirit could therefore not come, the promise could not be fulfilled till the great work of redemption on the cross had been accomplished and the Lord Jesus Christ had risen from the dead and taken His place in Glory. In the subsequent promises in this Gospel, the Lord always spoke of the coming of the Comforter in connection with His own departure. He promised that the other Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, was to be in them; but none of these promises could be fulfilled before He Himself had been glorified. We have already seen how He, before His departure to be with the Father, had told them to tarry in Jerusalem, to await the promise of the Father, and how He had reminded them that: "John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized of the Holy Spirit after not many days." On the day of Pentecost all these blessed promises were once and for all fulfilled. As all believers are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews x) so all believers share in the accomplished promise of the Father and are in the possession of the Holy Spirit. But we must emphasize that He was not given by measure, but He, the person, came Himself. What a blessed Work, a work we cannot fully estimate, the Lord Jesus Christ must have accomplished on the cross, that the third person of the Trinity came down from heaven and has made His abiding place in believing sinners! His presence therefore testifies not only to the fact that the promise of the Father has been accom-

plished, but also to the efficacy of the precious blood, and that Jesus is in glory at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

It is therefore incorrect to ask God for the gift of His Spirit, or to plead promises which He fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. It is not scriptural to pray for a greater baptism of the Spirit, as it is often done, or, to ask God to give more of the Spirit. He has given us His Spirit, He seals every believer and indwells every child of God.

And what are the purposes of the gift of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost? Without giving a lengthy dissertation on the work of the Holy Spirit in this age we only point out that the purpose of His coming is revealed in the historical event reported to us in this chapter. Other purposes are indicated, and these are later fully revealed in the Pauline Epistles. The Book of Acts, as a purely historical book, does not contain a single doctrine of the Holy Spirit; it rather shows revealed doctrine in its practical side.

Two things are at once apparent. He came upon the assembled believers individually, and also did a work in a corporate way. Each believer on that day was filled with the Holy Spirit. He came as the indweller to each. But He also was present as the mighty rushing wind which filled all the house. He did not only come upon each, but all were baptized of the Holy Spirit, and He united them into a body. In 1 Corinthians xii:13 the more complete revelation is given concerning this fact. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The One Spirit is the Holy Spirit as He came on the day of Pentecost, the One Body is the church. All believers were on that day united by the Spirit into the one body, and since then, whenever and wherever a sinner believes in the finished work of Christ, he shares in that baptism and is joined by the Spirit to that one body.

He may be in dense ignorance about all this, as indeed the great majority of believers are; but this does not alter the gracious fact of what God has done and is doing. The believing company was then formed on the day of Pentecost into one body. *It was the birthday of the church.*

There is an interesting correspondency between the second chapter of Luke and the second chapter of Acts, which we cannot pass by without mentioning. In the first chapter of Luke we have the announcement of the birth of the Saviour. The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." In the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke, the same who penned the book of Acts, we read of the accomplishment of that promise given to the virgin. And so the second chapter of Acts contains the fulfillment of a similar promise. The Holy Spirit came and the church, the mystical body of Christ began.

We said that Pentecost marks the beginning of the church on earth. This is often doubted by Christian believers. Some claim that the church began in the Old Testament. The sixteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew answers this wrong statement and belief completely. Others teach that the church did not begin on Pentecost, but some time later, after the Apostle Paul had begun his activity. So far has this point been pressed that membership in the body of Christ has even been denied to the twelve apostles, that they were exclusively on kingdom ground. That such theories and views are not only fanciful but very confusing and harmful needs not to be demonstrated. It is quite true that the doctrine concerning the church as the body of Christ as well as the other relationships was not made known on the day when the Holy Spirit was poured out. In fact, any doctrine would be out of place in a book

which gives a historical account. But this does not mean that the start was not made. The foundation of the building as described in Ephesians are the Apostles and Prophets (not Old Testament Prophets, but the New Testament Prophets). Later Gentiles were added to be joint heirs of the same body and joint partakers of the promises. Then through the chosen instrument, the Apostle Paul, the secret which was not made known in other ages was made known. The Apostles and the Prophets knew of it according to Ephes. iii:5, but only to the Apostle Paul was it given to reveal it.

That the church as the body of Christ existed before Paul ever revealed the mystery is clearly seen from the account of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. The glorified Christ was seen by him on the road to Damascus. He heard Him speak and these were His words: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest Thou ME?" He was not persecuting Jesus Christ personally, but he was persecuting such who had believed in Christ. The Lord from the glory owns these as part of Himself. They were indeed members of His body.

We state it again, the Holy Spirit came to each believer on the day of Pentecost, they received Him, He filled them individually and corporately they were united into one body. And what was done then is done in the case of every believing one who rests on the finished work of Christ. As a believer each receives the Holy Spirit and becomes a member of the body of Christ. "There may be a variety of forms and measures in which His power is displayed; there may be and are different degrees in which the joy of His presence is entered into; but the fact remains (and what can be more glorious and blessed than the fact) that, as to Himself he dwells equally in every believer who rests now on the finished redemption in Christ Jesus."*

*Lectures on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Of many other things which might be mentioned by way of introduction we only mention two.

The testimony was given by the Spirit filled disciples and every man heard them speak in his own language; those who were present were "out of every nation under heaven." They were all Jews not a single Gentile was present. However, the event shows that the good news was to go forth in the new age, to every nation under heaven.

Lastly we call attention to the fact that the events on the day of Pentecost have a special Jewish-national significance. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is demonstrated. The signs are given to show unto the people Israel that Jesus of Nazareth whom they rejected is the Christ and at the right hand of God. The day of Pentecost marks the beginning of a second offer of mercy to the nation. This fact will be carefully studied as we expound this chapter and the chapters which follow. And now we turn to the text itself.

I. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

> And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Verses 1-4.)

Pentecost is a Jewish feast. This name was given to this feast by the Greek-speaking Jews, because it occurred 50 days after the offering of the barley sheaf during the Passover feast. In the Old Testament it has three names. "*Chag Ha Kasir*" Feast of Harvest, Exodus xxiii:16; "*Chag Shavuoth*" Exodus xxxiv:22, Feast of Weeks and "*Yom*

ha-Bikkurim" Num. xxviii:26; Day of the First Fruits. The orthodox Jews call it simply "Shavuoth." It commemorates the wheat harvest. After the exile it became the traditional feast to remember the giving of the law, the birthday of the Torah (law). The orthodox Jews in keeping it, at the present time, besides the prayers they offer, read publicly in their synagogues the account of the giving of the law as recorded in Exodus.

From the prophets they read the first chapter of the Prophet Ezekiel and the third chapter of Habakkuk. No doubt this was their custom at the time when the Holy Spirit was poured out. It is not unlikely that the Jews were occupied with the reading of these portions of God's Word, when suddenly there came the sound from heaven. It is certainly a significant fact that some of the outward signs which were present when the law was given, the "tempest," "fire" and "the voice of words" (Hebrews xii:18–19) were prominent on the day when the Holy Spirit came. A new dispensation was inaugurated with outward signs and wonders. But as the outward signs were not present at all times during the dispensation of the law, but simply in the beginning, so in this new dispensation these outward signs were only for the beginning.

The reading on the day of Pentecost of the first chapter of Ezekiel and the third of Habakkuk, especially the latter, is prophetic. It points towards that time when Jehovah-Jesus will be manifested in visible glory, and when all that will be fulfilled spoken concerning the nation Israel, which was not fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, nor ever after up to the present time.

Before we look at the details of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit we wish to mention the day of the week on which the event occurred. This is an interesting question. It was no doubt on the Lord's day. The best which has been written on this point is by Lightfoot. As his

statements are not accessible to all we quote here from his Horae Hebraeicae:

"Let us inquire, therefore, whether the day of Pentecost fell on their sabbath day. I know, indeed, that the fifty days are reckoned by some from the resurrection of our Lord; and then Pentecost, or the fiftieth day, must fall on the fiftieth day of the week, that is our Lord's day; but if we number the days from the common epoch, that is from the time of offering the sheaf of firstfruits, which account doubtless Luke follows, then the day of Pentecost fell on the Jewish sabbath. And here, by the good leave of some learned men, it may be questioned, whether the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples on the very day of Pentecost, or not. The reasons of this question may be these:

"1. The ambiguity of the words themselves 'when the day of Pentecost was fully come.' In Italian they are translated '*E nel finire del giorno della Pentecoste*" that is 'when it was fully gone.' So that the phrase in the Greek leaves it undetermined, whether the day of Pentecost was fully come or fully gone, and what is there could be alleged against it, should we render it in the latter sense?*

"2. It is worthy of our observation, that Christ the antitype, in answering some types that represented Him, did not tie Himself up to the very day of the type itself for the fulfilling of it, but put it off to the day following. So it was not upon the very day of Passover, but the day following, that Christ, our passover, was sacrificed for us; it was not on the very day that the sheaf of the firstfruits was offered, but the day following, that Christ became the firstfruits of them that slept. And so it was agreeable to reason and to the order wherein He disposed of things already mentioned, that He should give the day following, the day

*Rotherham translated it "when the day of Pentecost was being filled up." The original shows that the feast was in process.

of His own resurrection from the grave; that the Spirit should not be poured out upon the same day wherein the giving of the law was commemorated, but upon a day that might keep up the commemoration of Himself forever.

"3. We can hardly think of a more fit and proper reason why upon this day they should be gathered together in one place, than that they were so gathered together for the celebration of the Lord's day. . . . On that day beyond all controversy, the Holy Spirit did come down amongst them."

On the Lord's day they were all together. How large the number we do not know, yet it is more than probable that every believer in the Lord was present. Suddenly something happened. A sound was heard from heaven. The sound was more than a mighty wind; the literal rendering of the description is "as a violent, impetuous blowing." This mighty rushing, blowing wind filled the house where they were sitting. It all came to pass in the twinkling of an eye.

Before we continue our meditation on this event we call attention briefly to the mode and manner of the departure of the church from the earth. It will be "suddenly." This is according to His own and last promise, "Behold I come quickly" (lit.: speedily). Some day He will come suddenly for His saints and take them to Glory into His own presence as revealed in 1 Thessal. iv:13–18 The birth of the church was an instantaneous event as well as miraculous. The departure of the true church will be the matter of a moment and will be miraculous. But this is only a passing thought suggested by the word "suddenly."

The rushing wind, which filled the whole house, was the first sign of the advent of the Holy Spirit. As an outward sign it accompanied the descent of the divine Person who

had come to dwell in these believers and to form and start the building, which is His habitation. In 1 Kings viii, verse 2 we read that the cloud, the sign of Jehovah's presence, filled the whole house after the sacrifices had been brought. But here was a still greater event than that which took place at the dedication of the great Solomonic temple. The whole house was filled in which the believers were gathered to signify thereby that from now on there would be a nobler building on earth, the church, the habitation of God through the Spirit (Ephes. ii:22).

Besides this outward sign for the sense of hearing there was also a visible sign that the Holy Spirit had come. There appeared unto them parted tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them. While the filling of the house indicated the fact that His abode would be the church, the parted tongues as of fire sitting upon each, testified to the fact that every one of the company had received Him. There was no difference among them. Peter, John and James did not receive "more of Him" than the youngest and weakest of these believers. The person, not a power or influence given by measure, had filled each and every believer. He came as the gift of God.

The parted tongues as of fire were the symbols of the diverse languages in which the testimony concerning Christ and the blessed Gospel was now to go forth. The fire was of course not literal fire. It is symbolical of the righteousness and holiness of God, as well as of judgment.

"The tongues were 'as of fire,' for the testimony of Grace was none the less founded on righteousness. The Gospel is intolerant of evil. This is the wonderful way in which God now speaks by the Holy Spirit. Whatever the mercy of God, whatever the proved weakness, need and guilt of man, there is not nor can be the least compromise of holiness. God can never sanction the evil of man. Hence the Spirit of God was thus pleased to mark the

character of His presence, even though given of the grace of God, but founded on the righteousness of God. God could afford fully to bless. It was no derogation from His Glory; it was after all but His seal on the perfectness of the work of the Lord Jesus."

And this great gift was not only given to that assembled company of believers, but every one who is born again throughout this age in which the church is forming, shares in this gift and the Holy Spirit is through Grace the heavenly and abiding guest in the believer. There is no need for the believer to ask Him to come, but the need is to realize in faith that we are the temples of the Holy Spirit and then live and act according to this great truth. But there was a third sign. They began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Thus we have three great signs: The mighty rushing winds, the parted tongues as of fire and the speaking in other tongues, the result of the Holy Spirit's inward presence.

Wind, fire and voices. As stated before the Law at Sinai was given under some of these accompanying signs. This is likewise true of some of the other theophanies of the Old Testament, for instance in the history of Elijah, where the tempest, the fire and the still small voice are prominent. All this shows that a divine person, God the Holy Spirit, had come. A most interesting talmudical tradition declares that when God gave the Law from Sinai the voice of God parted into seven voices; each of the seven voices again parted into different voices, so that God heralded the law in seventy different tongues heard by all the nations of the earth.

This is only a tradition and no doubt incorrect, but here on the day of Pentecost a miracle took place in that all who had received the Holy Spirit spoke in other tongues.

We give this part of the chapter the most careful attention. It is of great importance that we examine this

miraculous evidence of the advent and presence of the Holy Spirit as thoroughly as we can. Of late a movement has sprung up, which appears in different sects and calls itself either the Apostolic Faith, or the Pentecost Movement, etc. These movements claim that the Holy Spirit is poured out again and that along with His coming there is the same miracle of the gift of tongues.

And now before we take up this subject in detail we read the contents of the next paragraph of this chapter.

II. The immediate effect of His Presence

> And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. (Verses 5-15.)

It is clear from the inspired narrative that all the assembled believers spoke in other tongues, that is, in different languages, and that it was as the Holy Spirit gave them to speak forth. This third great sign which happened on the day of Pentecost has been differently interpreted, and by some the miracle has been altogether denied. We mention very briefly some of these different views.

One prominent view which was already advanced by some of the so-called "church-fathers," and which has not a few modern followers, is that the miracle consisted in the way

the multitude heard rather than in the speaking of the Spirit-filled disciples. According to this view the people heard in the different languages, while the company of the believers only spoke in their own tongue. This view hardly needs an answer, because it states something which is in direct opposition to the words of the record, "*they* began to speak in other tongues."

Some of the critics claim that the speaking and hearing must have been the result of a "magnetic report" between the speakers and the hearers. Such a foolish view is easily answered by the fact that they first spake and there was none there to listen, some time later the multitude crowded in, attracted by the rumor. Others declared that the new or other tongues meant a new spiritual language, or that they spoke in an unusual, enthusiastic poetical phraseology, etc. All these versions as well as others are in such flagrant contradiction with the simple words here before us that it is unnecessary to follow them any further.

The speaking in other languages was a miracle produced by the Holy Spirit who had come upon them in mighty power. These Galileans spoke in different tongues, sixteen at least, if not more. "By a sudden and powerful inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these disciples uttered, not of their own minds, but as mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit, the praises of God in various languages hitherto, and possibly at the time itself, unknown to them."*

The significance of this miracle speaking in other tongues is not hard to discover. It was the oral manifestation of the parted tongues of fire, which had come upon each. Besides this it proclaimed the great fact that the Holy Spirit had come to make known the blessed Gospel to all nations under heaven, and though no Gentiles were present when this took place, the languages of the Gentiles were heard,

*Dean Alvord in Greek New Testament.

and that from Jewish lips, indicating that the Gospel should indeed go forth to the uttermost parts of the earth. For the unbelieving multitude it was a sign though we do not read anything in the record that they were converted by hearing their different languages spoken. They were amazed and in perplexity, while others mocked; upon those it made no impression at all. The great result on the day of Pentecost was by the preaching of the Gospel from Peter's lips.

This brings before us the question, What did they speak in these different tongues? Did they all proclaim in an orderly discourse the Gospel, or relate something concerning the person of Christ, or were their utterances rather of an ecstatic nature, in the form of praising God, exalting His Name? We believe the latter was the case. It was rather an outburst of praise to God for the great things He had done, than the preaching of the Gospel. All was done, no doubt, in perfect order and not in confusion. The gift was bestowed just for this occasion and not for future use.

We look in vain through this Book to find that they continued in speaking in these different languages. It is a wrong conception to think that they exercised this gift ever after in preaching the Gospel. From the sixteenth chapter we learn that Paul and Barnabas did not understand the Lycaonian speech; the Greek language was universally used and made the use of the other languages almost unnecessary.

Twice more we find in this book the tongues mentioned in connection with the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts x: 46 and chapter xix: 6. In the first passage Cornelius and his household having believed the Gospel received the Holy Spirit and they spake with tongues. Not a word is said in this instance that other languages were used. There was no need for it. It was an ecstatic speech glorifying God. In chapter xix after the Apostle Paul had laid hands upon the disciples of John whom he had found in Ephesus (a thing which Peter did not do with Cornelius) the Holy Spirit came

upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Here again not a word is said about anyone hearing a strange language. The speaking in tongues is here paired with prophesying. These are the three instances in the Book of Acts where speaking in tongues is mentioned. On the day of Pentecost; Cornelius and his house and the Jewish disciples found in the dispersion, waiting for the Hope of Israel. In each case it was for a sign and for a specific purpose, but only in the first instance are different dialects and languages mentioned. On the day of Pentecost the gift was for a sign to the multitude; in chapter x the evidence to Peter and the Apostles that the Gentiles had received the same gift (chapter xi: 15) and in chapter xix the outward evidence that the Jewish disciples of John had also received the Holy Spirit and shared in the same gift.

We read not a word about this gift in connection with the other places visited by the apostles, not a word is said about speaking in tongues in the ministry of Philip in Samaria, nor during the great journeys of the Apostle Paul, with the exception of the case mentioned above. It is therefore clear that the speaking in tongues was neither a universal nor a permanent gift, and that it appeared only in these three cases for a sign.

We emphasize these facts on account of these spurious movements which claim that a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit is now in progress, that each believer must seek "his Pentecost" and that the true evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is the speaking in an unknown tongue. Such claims are unscriptural and cannot at all be confirmed by the historical account of this book for thousands and tens of thousands were saved and baptized by the one Spirit into the one body, the Holy Spirit filling them, without ever speaking in an unknown tongue. Stephen was a believer who was indeed full of the Holy Spirit. Nowhere do we read that he had the gift of tongues.

However in the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians we find a long chapter in which "speaking in unknown tongues" is largely entered into. From this chapter we learn that that gift was prevalent in the Corinthian assembly (chapter xiv). In the twelfth chapter where the different gifts of the Spirit are enumerated we find the speaking in tongues and the interpretation of these tongues mentioned. They stand last in the list, showing thereby their inferior place. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, addressed to that assembly of believers who enjoyed the best gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Word of Wisdom and the Word of Knowledge, no mention whatever is made of the speaking in tongues. What the spiritual condition of the assembly in Corinth was we learn from this entire epistle.

Their walk was carnal, all kinds of wicked things had been tolerated in their midst; sectarianism and vain-glory held sway. Their spiritual knowledge was very low indeed, and the Holy Spirit could not flash forth the great truths, which He so fully reveals in the Epistle to the Ephesians. He had to take up a good part of the epistle with correcting their evil habits and walk. That the gift of tongues was sought for by these Corinthians can be learned from the chapter in which the Holy Spirit through Paul enlarges upon this gift. May they not have sought it for the sake of display rather than to glorify God with it? Then no doubt women were in the foreground, and they are especially cautioned. "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (xiv: 34–35).

In this modern movement women seem to be very much in the foreground, acting in many instances as preachers and leaders, and therefore in direct disobedience to the Word of God. Eyewitnesses have told us that they were in such

"gift of tongue meetings" where women became hysterical, rolled on the floor, uttered all kinds of queer noises, screeched like the former prophets of Baal "Oh God, send the power!" One friend said he felt he was among demons. Convulsions, rigor and foaming at the mouth like madmen were also noticed. Some such things may have also happened in Corinth for we read several exhortations in this chapter which point in this direction. "For God is not the author of confusion (lit.: tumult)" (verse 33). "Let all things be done decently and in order" (verse 40). We quote here from a pamphlet by Dr. Arthur T. Pierson, on 1 Corinthians xiv.

(1) Speaking in an unknown tongue is *unintelligible to the hearer*. If it be genuine, it is only known as such to God, so that even when one so speaks in the Spirit he speaks mysteries to all others—which we take to be the true reading here.

(2) Speaking with tongues, therefore, is not in and by itself *edifying* to men. While prophesying is profitable for "edification, exhortation and comfort," the gift of tongues in itself can do no more than cause the hearer to wonder and be in awe at what he understands not.

(3) Speaking with tongues, therefore, is comparatively *undesirable* and *unserviceable*. It ranks last among all the Spirit-gifts and manifestations, and is mentioned among the last in the enumeration in chapter xii: 7–10, where seven other gifts out-rank it.

(4) Speaking with tongues is *dependent for all real value* upon the companion gift of *interpretation* of tongues, and hence is coupled with it in the previous category of gifts (xii: 10). In fact, only such interpretation of what is uttered can lift it to the level of "that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. iv: 29). There is no speaking with tongues apart from such interpretation, no profit, for it brings no "revelation," "knowledge," "prophesying," or "doctrine" (verse 6).

(5) More even than this: speaking with tongues may degenerate into *an empty display of the mysterious*—a mere babble, if not babel, of confusion, like many "sounds" (or "tunes"—margin), in which no one can tell what is sense and what is non-sense, what is spurious and what is genuine.

(6) Speaking with tongues is rather a means of *dispersion than of closer association.* Its tendencies are divergent, not convergent. As at babel, when they could not understand one another's speech they separated and scattered, so, if the hearer "know not the meaning of the voice," the speaker will 'be unto him a barbarian"—*i. e.*, a foreigner, and conversely.

(7) Such a gift, therefore, acts rather as a *hindrance* than *a help to common joint worship.* Part of the power and acceptableness of all worship and service in the assembly depends on the *responsiveness of the worshipper to the leader.* Whether it be the service of song, praise, or prayer, or hearing of the Word, what is in a dead language cannot evoke the hearer's "Amen." How can the heart intelligently answer to what is not understood by the "unlearned?" However well the speaker does, the hearer cannot enter into the sentiment of what is spoken, and *joint* worship or communion is impossible.

(8) The Apostle hints further that speaking with tongues alone—independent of interpretation—may even *work damage.* He pictures an assembly, where all speak with tongues, as impressing an unbelieving outsider so unfavorably that he declares them "*mad*" (verse 23). In such a jargon of confused sounds, he thinks himself in a mad house.

(9) Paul goes even further, and by the Spirit enjoins that, when such gift actually is bestowed, *its exercise shall be carefully regulated.* And for such regulation he gives two distinct laws: (*a*) The law of *precedence;* (*b*) the law of *silence.* If any speak in unknown tongues, let it be two or three at a time, and these in succession, not all at once; and

let the interpretation accompany each utterance. And, secondly, if there be no *interpretor*, let the speaking with tongues be *suppressed altogether*—let him who has the gift keep *silence* toward *man*, and use his gift toward *God*, who *can* understand him.

(10) His final argument is that what produces *confusion and not order* cannot be of God, for He is not the author of disorder, but of decent conformity to law and order, and "peace." While, therefore, speaking with tongues is not to be *forbidden*, it is not to be *coveted*, but rather the edifying, instructive, intelligible utterances of inspired *teaching*.

(11) It is more than hinted here also that speaking with tongues is peculiarly open to *spurious imitation*. The Devil, who is the master counterfeiter, is always with peculiar subtlety *imitating* the manifestations of the Spirit. When God is mightily working, so is he; and no one gift of the Spirit is so easily "aped" as this. So long as there be no interpretation to make the language intelligible, who shall tell whether it be blessing or cursing, reverent or profane! Not only can interpretation alone make speaking with tongues edifying, but this alone can attest it as genuine.

(12) Some think that the injunction here, bidding the Corinthian "*women* keep silence in the assemblies," has special reference to this speaking with tongues. Women in the Orient were then, as now, especially excitable and prone to excess. When once emerging from seclusion and privacy of their home life, and introduced into the new freedom of the Christian brotherhood, they often ran into the wildest fanaticism, and might easily have mistaken an hysterical mania, with its incoherent mutterings, for a gift of supernatural utterance.

Another recent writer on the glossolaly or gift of tongues states the matter still more briefly. "We notice that, though Paul spoke with tongues more than all the Corin-

thians, he does not set a high value on the gift of glossolaly. He ranks it last of the gifts and apparently among childish things (1 Corinth. xiv:18–20). For (1) it did not edify others. Rather (2) it tended to cause disorder in the church. (3) The fact that the speaking in tongues lay in the spiritual and not in the rational sphere opened the door to dangerous confusion. Its phenomena might be counterfeited either by evil spirits, or by religious impostors and charlatans of which the world was then full. Again it might be hard at times to distinguish them from similar symptoms due to physical causes, etc."

This warning is well founded indeed. It is a territory on which Satan appears as an angel of light and it is to be expected that he will develop an increasing energy in this direction as the coming of our Lord draws nigh. In an address on the characteristics of the age,* Mr. Philip Mauro spoke a timely word on this matter which bears repeating:

"The wicked spirits, or demons, who form part of this spiritual host, display abnormal activity at the time of our Lord's first coming; and now again, as His second coming approaches, they are aroused to a state of great activity. Spirit 'control' and 'possession,' accompanied by unusual physical demonstrations, rigor, protracted unconsciousness, convulsions, hysterics, spasmodic movements, strange noises, which may or may not be articulate speech of some sort (and hence easily confounded with the Holy Spirit's gift of tongues) are now quite common and becoming more so. These abnormal manifestations are no longer confined to circles where spiritism, hypnotism and the like are openly cultivated, but are now breaking out among groups of God's people who have been induced to stray away from scriptural ground, and to seek for excitements and 'experiences,' who are urged by misguided teachers to yield themselves, to

*Published in pamphlet form by "Our Hope."

come under 'control,' to seek 'power' instead of weakness, and otherwise to disregard the plain injunctions of Scripture."

Now while it is true that there was such a gift as speaking in an unknown tongue in the apostolic age, and no Christian believer would doubt the power of God to impart to a person the gift to preach the Gospel in a foreign tongue, we do not believe that this gift of speaking in an unknown tongue was to abide in the church. Repeatedly claims were made in years gone by that it had been restored (for instance during the Irvingite delusion in England), but in every case it was found to be spurious or emanating from the enemy. The present day "apostolic or pentecostal movement" with its high pretensions and false doctrines, lacking true scriptural knowledge and wisdom, creating new schisms in the body, with its women leaders and teachers, has all the marks of the same great counterfeiter upon it.

The Epistle to the Ephesians, that highest revelation of God, speaks of the gifts which are to abide. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers; we still have them. The apostles are of course the men of God, the great gifts through whom the Holy Spirit revealed the great doctrines and truths of the New Testament, Peter, John, James, Paul as well as those who were not apostles, but the prophets, the mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit. Evangelists preach the Gospel so that the body of Christ may become complete as to numbers; these will ever remain till the last member is added to the body. Then pastors and teachers to shepherd the flock of God, for the perfecting of the Saint. These gifts of our risen Head will abide. But there is not a word said about miraculous sign-gifts in this great epistle.

But some have suggested that when the age draws to its close the Holy Spirit will once more unfold special energies to give a last witness, and that in the closing of the age the Gospel of the kingdom will be heralded with accom-

panying signs and miracles among all the nations. This is partially founded on truth. The Gospel of the kingdom is to be preached and most likely special signs may accompany that preaching during that period known as "the great tribulation." However, the preachers of that last witness are not Christian believers, members of the one body, but the Jewish remnant will do this great work.

On the other hand, everything in the New Testament Epistles as well as in the Book of Revelation, shows that decline, ruin and apostasy and not restoration of apostolic gifts and power mark the close of this Christian age. To demonstrate this fully would be quite impossible in this connection.

Before we follow Peter's great address to the assembled multitude, a brief word on the peoples, which are mentioned as composing the amazed company, may be in order. When it says "every nation under heaven," it does not mean that representatives of all the Gentile nations were there. The phrase has reference to the Jews and proselytes living then in dispersion outside of the land. All the countries into which they had wandered were represented in the multitude. Gentiles as such were not present. Nor were those present only from the house of Judah. The ten tribes were most likely also represented. This may be learned from Peter's address. He first addresses the men of Judah and all that dwell at Jerusalem; then he addresses them as men of Israel. So that in all probability Judah and Israel, the two houses into which the people of God had been divided, were represented. These may have dwelt in Parthia, Media, Elam and Mesopotamia. That the ten tribes were known in apostolic times is also seen by the fact that James addressed his epistle to "the twelve tribes in the dispersion." We mention this because occasionally some one inquires about that fanciful theory called "Anglo-Israel," which claims that the Anglo-Saxon race is composed of the lost tribes.

Representatives of "all Israel" were present when the Holy Spirit was poured out in Jerusalem upon the believing Jews and when Peter arose to address them.

III. Peter's Address.

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all *ye* that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Verses 14-21.)

What an impressive scene it must have been when, in the midst of the tumult the outbursts of praise and adoration, the ever-increasing multitude, Peter and the eleven with him arose. Twelve divinely appointed men, the twelve apostles, faced the representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel. Peter is the spokesman. What boldness, courage and directness characterizes now the man and his speech! What a change from the Peter before Pentecost! It was all the result of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Such boldness and courage to witness for the absent Lord is our blessed privilege likewise, for we have received the same Spirit.

Peter's address deals with the great historical facts of the gospel; the heart and centre of it is the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus. In its scope and pointedness it is a most wonderful production. It is in itself an evidence

that the Holy Spirit had come and that He witnessed through Peter.

The main part of the address has three divisions. Each begins with a personal address to the hearers, states a great vital fact in terse language and closes with a passage from the Scriptures.

1. Verses 14–22. In the opening of his address he speaks to them as "men of Judea and all ye inhabitants of Jerusalem." Then, after briefly refuting the charge of drunkenness, he quotes from the book of Joel. With this Scripture quotation the first part of the address closes.

2. Verses 22–28. Now he addresses them as "men of Israel." Here we find a brief witness of the life, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus the Nazarean. Then he quotes, from the Book of Psalms, the sixteenth Psalm.

3. Verses 29–36. The last part he begins with "Brethren"; in it he speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit as the result of the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The briefest but deepest of all the Messianic Psalms is quoted, the one hundred and tenth. The chief part of his address closes with the following words: "Let the whole house of Israel, therefore, assuredly know that God has made Him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." After the interruption which followed, addressed to the twelve, "What shall we do, brethren?" Peter spoke again, and not all his words are reported. "And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, Be saved from this perverse generation."

What a great model this first sermon after the gift of the Holy Spirit ought to be for all who preach the Word. The Holy Word of God has the leading part in it to witness to the person of Christ. The difference between Peter's preaching

and much of the modern day preaching is indeed appalling.*

But briefly we shall now meditate on these different parts of Peter's address. Its aim as already stated, was to prove to the house of Israel that the crucified Jesus is raised from the dead and that God made Him Lord and Christ, witnessed to by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The accusation had been, "they are full of new wine." To answer this false charge was the first necessary step. Peter lifted up his voice, which means that he spoke in loud tones, which was no doubt needed on account of the confusion which must have prevailed. He declared that it was but the third hour of the day and for this reason it would be next to impossible that the Spirit-filled disciples were drunk with new wine. The third hour corresponds to our ninth hour of the morning. On the Sabbath or other feast days no Jew would eat or drink before that hour; this custom was universally observed at that time, and it is still so with the so-called "Chasidim," the most orthodox Jews. Nothing is tasted before the prayers of the synagogue are ended; these are sometimes prolonged till noon. This fact, apparent to all and not controvertible, disposed at once of the false charge. And now Peter states what it is they were witnessing. He quotes from one of the great Old Testament prophecies in the book of Joel.† That Peter quotes Joel in connection with his address to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem shows the accuracy of the Scriptures, for Joel's prophecy was addressed to Judah and Jerusalem. In the next place we notice the language Peter uses in quoting Joel: "This is that which

*The continual use of anecdotes, pleasant little stories, which make old people smile and send the young folks a-giggling is especially to be condemned in Gospel preaching. The Gospel is too solemn a thing to be mixed with hilarity.

†See Exposition of "The Prophet Joel." Published by "Our Hope."

was spoken through the prophet Joel"; careless and superficial expositors have often stated that Peter said that all this happened in fulfillment of what was spoken by Joel. He did not use the word fulfilled at all. Had he spoken of a fulfillment then of Joel's prophecy, he would have uttered something which was not true, for the great prophecy of Joel was *not* fulfilled on that day. Nor has this prophecy been fulfilled since Pentecost, nor will it be fulfilled during this present Gospel age. This great prophecy which Peter quotes in part will be accomplished at the end of the Jewish age, that end which has not yet come and which cannot come as long as the church is on the earth.* Joel's prophecy will be fulfilled in connection with the coming of the Lord. Before that day comes there will be visible signs of which the prophet speaks. All this is still in the future. Before it can all be fulfilled, the events spoken of by Joel as preceding this prophecy must be accomplished, and, besides this, the church must be removed from the earth in the way as revealed in the Word (1 Thessal. iv: 15–18).

Comparing Peter's words here with Joel's words we find that Peter uses instead of the phrase found in Joel, "it shall come to pass after these things," the expression, "it shall be in the last days."

It is important to notice this. The Septuagint has the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew, "after these things." Peter specifies the time to which the prophecy refers. The phrase, "after these things," means "the last days." One of the leading Jewish expositors makes the same statement. "And it shall come to pass after these things" is the same as "it shall come to pass in the last days."† The prophecy

*There remains one week (seven years) of Daniel's seventy-week prophecy to be fulfilled. That last week comes in after the church is completed and these seven years constitute the end of the Jewish age, interrupted by this present church age.

†David Kimchi, who lived from 1160–1235 A. D.

relates, therefore, to the last days. This phrase, found in the Old Testament, has reference to the coming days of the Messiah, when He shall come as King and establish His Kingdom in the midst of His earthly people. See Isaiah ii: 2–4; Micah iv: 1; Jeremiah xxiii : 20; Hosea iii: 4–5, etc. In this sense Peter uses the phrase here and not as applying to this present age at all. He tells the assembled multitude that something similar to that which they now were witnessing God had promised in connection with the days of Messiah. With His coming as King, the Spirit was to be poured out upon all flesh. That which they saw and heard was indeed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but not in the full sense as given in the prophecy of Joel. What took place was an evidence that Jesus, whom they had crucified, is the true Messiah and that what had taken place is a pledge that in due time all of the prophecy contained in the book of Joel would be fulfilled. What had really taken place was not known to Peter and to the eleven at that time. It was only subsequently revealed that by the one Spirit all were baptized into one body; the great purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit for this present age was not revealed or stated on the day of Pentecost. It was the fact only which Peter speaks of, that God had promised the gift of the Spirit in connection with the coming of the Messiah.

In regard to the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy we say once more than it cannot fall into the present age. Nor will it be fulfilled as long as the church is not removed from the earth. It comes with the second visible coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, preceding the establishment of His Kingdom. Pentecost was only the earnest of what is yet to take place in Jerusalem.

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and

foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life. thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. (Verses 22-28.)

Peter now puts before them in the second part of his address the whole story of the Messiah, whom they had rejected. He could therefore use, not the name as he had confessed Him at Caesarea Philipi, but he speaks of Him as "Jesus the Nazarene." By that name the lowly, blessed One had been known to them. That name, too, was written above His Cross; it was the name which was an offence to them. Inasmuch as it was the aim of the Holy Spirit to show the guilt of the nation, to demonstrate the humiliation and rejection of Christ and to declare His resurrection, no other name could be used. For us it would be improper to speak of Him as "Jesus the Nazarene"; we call Him by His name as He is revealed in resurrection, "The Lord Jesus Christ."

Briefly Peter traces the events during the past three years. These events were familiar to them. This Jesus the Nazarene was a man witnessed to by God by works of power and wonders and signs, which God had wrought. Many of his hearers had been, no doubt, eye-witnesses of the power of God and the wonders done. They were fully convinced, like Nicodemus, that no one could do these signs unless God was with him (John iii: 2). This same argument that His works prove Him to be that which He claimed to be was used by Himself. "The works which the Father has given me to finish, the same works that I

do bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me" (John v:36). But the stumbling block was that He had been crucified. Could He be truly the Messiah, who was spit upon, mocked, crowned with thorns, nailed to a cross? Was such an end in a shameful crucifixion not a sure evidence that He was not the One who was to possess glory and honor? The cross of Christ was the stumbling-block. But the Holy Spirit removes this and gives His answer.

The death of Jesus of Nazareth was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The sufferings of the Messiah had been fully revealed in the Old Testament; He must suffer these things and so enter into glory. All had come to pass according to the fore-knowledge of God. Eternally, from before the foundation of the world, God had made His plan and arranged all in His counsel. But Peter also shows that they were the guilty instruments. They by lawless men—that is, the Gentiles, into whose hands they had delivered Jesus—had crucified and slain Him. They were responsible for what had taken place. Thus the death of Christ is described.

But next follows the great climax, the resurrection of the One who had been slain. God raised Him up from the dead. By resurrection through God's power the final proof is given, yea, the highest proof, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. It was impossible that He could be held by the power of death. In being raised from the dead the "pains of death" were loosed. He came forth as the Firstfruits, victor over death and the grave. His redeemed people can now shout: "Oh, death, where is thy sting? Oh, grave, where is thy victory?" The deliverance for them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. ii:15) had come. Three great evidences are therefore given by Peter that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah: His life, His death, fulfilling what had been in

the counsel and foreknowledge of God, and by His resurrection.

The quotation from the sixteenth psalm follows. What mind of man could ever have discovered in that psalm a prophecy about Christ? The Holy Spirit throws His light upon the psalm. The Spirit who spoke through David had Christ in view. What David uttered he said "*as to Him.*" This ought to silence every "higher critic." All this needs no further explanation.

In this portion of his address Peter shows the path of Christ from humiliation to the death of the cross and His resurrection and all God's doings. In the next paragraph, the last part of the address of Peter, we behold Him by God made Lord and Christ.

"The Man Jesus of Nazareth was *by God* demonstrated, *by God* wrought in among them, *by God's* counsel delivered unto death, *by God* raised up, and finally *by God* made Lord and Christ."*

> Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with as unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Verses 29–36.)

With these words Peter has reached the climax of his address. "Men-brethren," a Hebraism meaning simply

*Alford. Greek Testament.

" Brethren," the same phrase he had used in addressing the waiting company before Pentecost, is how he addresses the gathered people. This loving expression shows how the Holy Spirit had filled him with love and how his heart was full of affection for his brethren according to the flesh. But he also is made very bold by the Spirit. His boldness, however, is not harshness, but characterized by tenderness; what he says is couched in humble and polite language. " Brethren, let it be allowed to speak with freedom to you." He addresses them on the matter of the prophecy already quoted from the sixteenth psalm concerning " the patriarch David." Here alone David is called a patriarch because he is the progenitor of the kingly race. There was a reason for enlarging upon that prophecy, which becomes the foundation of his appeal. None of the rabbis ever thought of applying the psalm to the promised Messiah. There is, however, an old tradition, which no doubt was known and believed in that day, which applied the psalm literally to David. This application was as follows: "Those words, " my flesh shall rest in hope," teach us that neither worm nor insect had any power over David." Peter shows that such a traditional belief that the words referred to David himself were incorrect. They could not mean King David.

David had died and been buried (1 Kings ii:10). Moses' burial place was not known, but the tomb (literally monument) of David was known amongst them in that day (Nehemiah iii:16). David saw corruption. It was, therefore, impossible that the prophecy could mean him. But David was a prophet and as such he spoke, not of himself, but of the promised descendant, who was to come out of his loins to occupy his throne. The promised son of David was none other than the Christ. So, " seeing it before " by the Word of God (see the similar expression in Gal. iii:8), he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ; in Him alone were these words fulfilled.

And now comes Peter's witness and that of the eleven as well as the other assembled believers. "This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we are witnesses." They had talked with Him, seen His body, knew that it was a real body of flesh and bones.* But Peter does not stop here with the fact of His resurrection. The Holy Spirit bears witness to an exaltation which human eyes had not beheld *at that time*. Stephen, Saul of Tarsus and the Apostle John were later privileged to behold the Christ in Glory. Here it is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. This Jesus has been exalted by the right hand of God. The presence of the Holy Spirit, who had been poured forth, as they beheld and heard, was the evidence that Jesus was with the Father at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Again the Holy Spirit turns to the Scriptures. How clearly He proves Himself on the day of His advent that He testifies in the Word and through the Word! He quotes now another psalm, which was known among the Jews as prophesying about the Messiah. "David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I have put thine enemies to be the footstool of thy feet." This is the beginning of that sublime 110th psalm. This psalm our Lord had used to silence His enemies. His own testimony had brought out four indisputable facts about that psalm. 1. That David wrote the psalm. 2. That he wrote it by the Spirit. 3. That the psalm spoke of Himself. 4. That it revealed Himself as both David's son and David's Lord (Matt. xxii: 41–46). And now the Holy Spirit uses this psalm likewise to show that the Christ had to ascend into heaven and take His place at the right hand of God till the

*The perniciousness of the denial of the physical resurrection of our blessed Lord as taught in different evil "isms" (Millennial Dawn also called "International Bible Student Association") of the present day is fully laid bare in meditating on these words.

time should come when His enemies are made His footstool. This exalted place Jesus the Nazarene had now taken; that He was really there was fully demonstrated by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But we must not overlook something else which this prophecy teaches. These Jews might have said, If Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, why does He not take the throne of His father David and begin His Kingdom reign? The 110th psalm gives the answer. He was to go to heaven first and sit upon His Father's throne. He was to wait there for the promised Kingdom while His enemies are in opposition to Him. How perfect the Word of God is!

Here, then, was perfect proof, perfect evidence of the rejected One being the promised Messiah, raised from the dead, seated in Glory, waiting for the Kingdom, the throne of His father David. The Holy Spirit witnessed to all this.

Solemnly brief is the summing up and the appeal. "Let the whole house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made Him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." The crucified One is Lord and Christ. This was the great theme of Peter's address on the day of Pentecost. And this is still the great and blessed theme of the Gospel, which, whenever it is preached, has the power of God with it: Christ died—Christ arose—Christ is Lord—Christ is in Glory—Christ is coming again.

IV. The Results of the Delivered Testimony.

Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same

day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. (Verses 37–41.)

Such were the wonderful results. It could not be otherwise. The Word had been preached. The Holy Spirit carried it home with convicting power to the hearts of the hearers. Before His ascension the Lord had left the promise to his disciples that they were to receive power with the gift of the Spirit. This power to witness had been bestowed upon the disciples and was fully manifested in Peter's bold testimony. The Holy Spirit backed it with His mighty power and the hearts and consciences of the hearers were pierced. They were convicted, after hearing all these words, of the great sin which had been committed by them in the rejection of Jesus. The guilt had been fully demonstrated, and now they cried out in terror: "Brethren, what shall we do?"

There is not a moment's delay in answering the great question. The divinely given instruction comes at once from Peter's lips. Repentance and baptism stand out very prominently in this answer to the conscience-stricken Jews, and attached to it is the promise of the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. These words not being correctly understood, have led to much confusion. Upon these words doctrines, especially concerning water baptism, have been built, which are not alone nowhere else taught in the Bible, but which are opposed to the Gospel. The words of Peter to his Jewish brethren have been used to make water-baptism a saving ordinance, that only by submission to water-baptism, with repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, can remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit be obtained. We do not enlarge upon these unscriptural conceptions nor controvert the utterly false doctrine of "baptismal regeneration," but rather, point out briefly what these words of Peter mean. We must bear in mind that Peter addressed those who had *openly* rejected Jesus. They had, therefore, also openly to acknowledge their wrong and thus openly own Him

as Messiah, whom they had disowned by delivering Him into the hands of lawless men. Repentance meant for them to own their guilt in having opposed and rejected Jesus. Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ (in which it differs from the baptism of John) was the outward expression of that repentance. It was for these Jews, therefore, a preliminary necessity. And here we must not forget that Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost had it still to do with the kingdom, as we shall more fully learn from his second address in the third chapter. Another offer of the kingdom was made to the nation. The great fact that the Holy Spirit had begun to form the body of Christ, the church, as stated before, was not revealed then. In this national testimony the word "repent" stands in the foreground, and their baptism in the name of Him whom they had crucified was a witness that they owned Him now and believed on Him. As soon as we leave the first part of this book in which Peter's preaching to the Jews is prominent, we find the word repentance no longer in the foreground; all the emphasis is upon "believe."* The Gospel in all its blessed fullness as revealed to the great apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, which he called "my Gospel," and as preached by him, makes "faith"—"believe" as prominent as Peter's preaching "repent."

Remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In connection with the Jews, baptism was a condition. There is no such condition for Gentiles. The case of Cornelius and those who were assembled in his house to whom Peter preached the Gospel, illustrates this fully. He had not mentioned a word about baptism for the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. When he had declared that through "His Name" whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins, his address was cut short; "the Holy Spirit fell on all them

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*Of course faith and repentance are inseparably connected.

which heard the Word" (chapter x:44). This clearly proves that baptism in water has nothing to do with the gift of the Holy Spirit to these believing Gentiles. Water baptism followed in their case. He commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. "For the Jews who had openly rejected the Lord, baptism is always pre-requisite; they must openly own Him whom they had disowned." The entire setting aside of ordinances in the case of the Gentiles at once destroys the ritualistic teaching as to baptism. According to this ritualistic teaching Cornelius must have received the Spirit while in an unregenerate condition, for he had not yet received "the sacrament of regeneration!"*

Peter told his hearers that the promise (remission of sins and the gift of the Spirit) is for them and their children. Blessed assurance to them and their offspring! Theirs are still the promises (Rom. ix:1–5). In a future day the Spirit will be poured out upon them, after their great national repentance, when they will mourn for Him (Zechariah xii:9–14; Ezekiel xxxix:29). But the promise is also to them who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call. Those afar off are the Gentiles. Peter, no doubt, could not fully realize the far-reaching meaning of this utterance. The Holy Spirit put these words into His mouth, but Peter did not understand then that the far-off Gentiles were to participate in the gift of the Spirit and become fellow heirs. To make it possible for him to go to the Gentiles the Lord had to give him a special vision. But the statement that the promise is to those who are far off, to as many as the Lord shall call, is otherwise significant. It shows that not all the Gentiles are to be brought into the one body, that not all the Gentiles will accept God's gracious offer during the age which began with Pentecost. Those who received the word were baptized. and in that day about three thousand were added.

*Numerical Bible, Acts p. 24.

It is not correct to speak of this as a fulfillment of the prediction in the 110th Psalm, as it has been done repeatedly. There it says: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The day of Pentecost was not that promised "day of His power." Nor is this age the age when He manifests His power. When He returns in power and in glory, the day of His power begins and then His earthly people will be a willing people. What took place on Pentecost was only the earnest of what shall yet take place amongst that nation.

V. The Gathered Company in Fellowship.

> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Verses 42–47.)

About three thousand had been added. We ask, added to what? Certainly to the company of the believers, which by the baptism of the Holy Spirit had been formed into one body. And now we learn at the close of this great chapter, that the church, or assembly, yet unrevealed, was indeed in existence. It is a most precious scene which is pictured to us in the above words. It shows the energy of the Holy Spirit in uniting these believers into one body, gathered together around the blessed person of the Lord. All is a simple testimony to the fact that the church did begin with this great event which transpired on Pentecost. While Peter gave that great testimony to the people, concerning the rejected, crucified and risen Jesus, that He is Lord and Christ,

those who repented, having believed the message, were added by the Spirit to the body.

In the foreground of the description of this happy, gathered company stands the fact that they "persevered in the apostles' doctrine." There was need of instruction and the Lord had given command that the apostles were to teach (Matt. xxviii:20). The teaching of the apostles must, of course, have been concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. They were, as revealed later, the foundation of the great spiritual building (Eph. ii: 20). That teaching is placed in the first place shows its great importance. True fellowship and prayer as well as right living, is only possible in the truth. Throughout the epistles, which concern the church, doctrine is always the first thing. One of the last exhortations the Holy Spirit gave through Paul, is an exhortation to be true to right teaching. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. i: 13)." Almost one of the last words in this epistle Paul wrote from the Roman prison predicts the departure from the doctrine of Christ. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. iv: 45). This is exactly what we see about us in the present day. An unrecoverable apostasy has set in and the true doctrine, the faith delivered unto the saints, has been given up. In accepting the teaching of the apostles they were in fellowship together. But the fellowship which they possessed and enjoyed was expressed in a special way. It was expressed "in the breaking of bread." Some expositors of this book make this "breaking of bread" a common meal.

A learned expositor, after a lengthy discussion on the phrase "breaking of bread," as used by the Jews, concludes by saying, "The breaking of bread must not be understood

by their eating together, but of the Eucharist (the Lord's Supper); which the Syriac interpreter does render so in express terms; a parallel to which we have in 1 Cor. x: 16 and Acts xx: 7."

It was the carrying out of the request which the blessed Lord had uttered during that memorable night in the presence of His disciples, "Do this in remembrance of Me." It is significant that we find this mentioned at once in this great historical book. The Holy Spirit having come to glorify Christ, did exactly what the Lord had foretold. "But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my Name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you" (John xiv: 26). One of the first things He brought to the remembrance of the disciples was the loving, tender request the Lord had made when He had broken the bread, foretelling the giving of His holy body, and handed them the cup filled with wine, the emblem of the precious blood to be shed. At that time they knew not what it all meant. But now the sufferings were ended; Christ had risen from the dead and returned to the Father. The Holy Spirit had come and opened their understanding. United by Him they met, as it seems for a time at least, daily, to break the bread and to pass the cup in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit led to this at once He signified by it how pleasing it is to Him to remember the dying love of the Son of God.

And if we had been there we would have beheld a simple gathering. No long robed priests officiating, no preparatory service, no ritual; nothing of the other things which tradition has connected with communion and by which the request of the Lord has been so completely obscured. They were just together praising God; exercising their holy priesthood by giving thanks in His Name. Then some one, moved by the Holy Spirit would arise and give thanks and

break the bread, of which all partook, and the same was done with the cup, which passed from hand to hand.

It must have been this breaking of bread which kept them close to the Lord and which kept His Person and His great love ever fresh before their hearts. There is no command given anywhere how often the Lord's supper is to be observed. Elsewhere we find that they came together on the first day of the week to break bread (Chapter xx:7). No doubt that was the custom in the assemblies at that time. Is it too much to carry out His loving request every Lord's Day, the day on which He left the grave? It is a sad evidence of the spiritual condition of Christendom, the way the request of the Lord is ignored. How grieving this must be to the Spirit of God. And what shall one say of such, who had the knowledge of the preciousness and simplicity of all this and who have given up the Lord's Supper altogether because they believe it is *an ordinance of the Kingdom.*

Then prayer is mentioned. They had their prayer meetings in which they prayed to God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Those about them greatly feared." The power of God was manifested in the gathered company; besides this many signs and wonders were wrought through the Apostles.

Then we find something additional. They had all things common and sold their possessions and goods. This was peculiar to Jerusalem and was an additional testimony to the existence of the one body, that they were members one of another. It was like a great happy family, which in reality they were through the Grace of God. It has often been attempted to reproduce these conditions, which has invariably led to great failure and dishonor to the Lord and the cause of Christ. All this was perfectly in order in the beginning in Jerusalem. We believe it was arranged just in that way to give at once the strongest possible picture

of that into which the united gathered company had been formed—one body.

They also went to the temple with one accord. In this they fulfilled but their great mission of being a testimony to the nation. The breaking of bread, however, was carried on in the house (not from house to house); in this respect they were outside of the camp.

And how happy they were! They had Christ, and that was enough. No system of theology, creeds, set of forms or any such thing, with which historical Christianity abounds—"Nothing but Christ." They received their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. Joy and singleness of heart are the two great characteristics of the true believer.

The good work went on. Many more were added to the assembly. They were added not by the efforts of themselves, by all kinds of methods, as it is done in our days to increase "church membership," but the LORD added to the assembly. He alone can add to that body of which He Himself is the head. Some have translated "Added daily those being saved." There is no need of doing this. It is correct—"Those that were to be saved." All those who were added by the Lord daily were true believers and as such they were saved. And yet they also were to be saved. The clouds of judgment were fast gathering over Jerusalem and over the nation; all who were added to the assembly were to be saved out of the judgment soon to fall upon that nation.

Thus ends the great and blessed chapter, the historical record of the advent of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the church.

CHAPTER III.

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the church on earth we find in this book the record of a second address given by the Apostle Peter. This utterance is Jewish and national, that is, an appeal to the nation to repent and to accept the rejected Jesus as the Christ. Connected with this solemn appeal is the promise of national blessing. Peter promises by the Spirit of God "times of refreshing" and "the restoration of all things," two expressions, which describe the kingdom as promised to Israel in the Old Testament. The condition upon which this promise of national blessing is made by Peter is the repentance and conversion of the nation. The second coming of the Lord Jesus is likewise mentioned by the Apostle. His second coming will result in the times of refreshing and the restitution of all things. This other testimony was occasioned by the healing of the lame man. But we must look at all this more closely.

The chapter is clearly divided into two parts: the healing of the lame man and the address of Peter. The first verses of the fourth chapter belong to the third chapter. We make therefore the following division:

I. **The healing of the lame man** (Chapter iii:1–11).

II. **Peter's address and appeal** (Verses 12–26).

III. **Their arrest** (Chapter iv:1–3).

IV. **The blessed results of the given testimony** (Chapter iv:4).

We take up each of these sections separately to point out some of the leading features.

I. The healing of the lame man.

> Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms. (Verses 1–3.)

It is not stated when this occurred. It could have been hardly on the same day on which the Holy Spirit came; it must have been a short time afterwards. Peter appears again upon the foreground as the leader. Though John was with him, there is no record of a single word which he spoke. Later we read once more of John when he went with Peter to Samaria. If a human pen had written the Acts of the Apostles, John, no doubt, would have been more frequently mentioned.*

Peter was the chosen instrument to preach the Gospel to the circumcision and deliver to the nation this new message of repentance. He is the leading figure throughout the first part of the Book of Acts. Both Peter and John went together into the temple. Though the Holy Spirit had come and filled them and separated them from the nation as such, giving them a new position, yet they still continued in their Jewish customs and observances. All this was for a purpose as long as God's mercy lingered over Jerusalem. The hour when they went up was the ninth hour, three in the afternoon, the usual hour for sacrifice and prayer. The people assembled for this purpose in the part of the temple called "the Court of the Women," because women were only permitted to go so far and were

*This is the case in "The Mythological Acts of the Apostles," an old work composed of traditions concerning the Apostles.

never allowed to go beyond. This court, 135 cubits square, was generally thronged with people at the ninth hour. The entrance to it was through a magnificent gate covered with bronze. To this place the Apostles went.

At the same time a lame man, who had been in this condition from his birth, was being carried towards that beautiful gate. There they laid him down in his helpless condition that he might beg from those who entered in. Daily he was to be seen; most likely for many years had he been there. Then he must have seen the Lord as He went to the temple and the miracles He did; yet this helpless beggar had not been healed. He reminds us vividly of that other lame man, who laid in the five porches and whom the Lord healed (John v). From the chapter which follows we learn that this lame man at the temple gate was forty years old. His condition and position is typical of the moral condition of the nation. Like this man, Israel was helpless with all its beautiful religious ceremonies, laying outside, with no strength to enter in. The age of the lame man finds a similar application; forty is the number of testing. The nation's condition as helpless, unable to walk in the statutes and laws of God, without strength, outside, and a beggar, is therefore fully picture in this lame man.

> And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the

people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. (Verses 5–11.)

The beggar had stretched out his hands to receive something from the two apostles. What prompted Peter and John to notice this lame man among the many others, who were there begging as he did, is not mentioned. Some have suggested that there was a special look and appeal in his eyes which attracted the two servants of the Lord. Did perhaps the lame man recognize them from former visits to the temple when they came as the followers of Jesus of Nazareth? We believe it was the Holy Spirit who directed Peter and John to look steadfastly upon him. The glorified Christ was about to act in His gracious power; the two apostles filled with His Spirit were His chosen and willing instruments.

Peter's word had been, Look on us. Obediently, the eyes of the lame man rest upon them. His expectation up to this point was to receive some help from their hands. He was indeed to receive something, but a far greater gift than he could have imagined. Silver and gold Peter declared he had not, but he had something else in store for him. He now speaks in that blessed Name, which is above every other Name, in the Name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, to rise up and to walk. It was then that faith was exercised by the lame man in that Name. The power of God is at once manifested. Peter takes hold of him and raised him up and immediately, not gradually, but without a moment's delay, his feet and ankle bones were made strong. The power of God in answer to that precious Name had come upon the lame man and he was instantly healed. He then walked and leaped and entered through the beautiful gate as a worshipper into the temple to praise God. What a sight it must have been!

But why was this miracle wrought at this time? It was wrought as another evidence for the unbelieving people that

Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had rejected and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, is the Messiah and their King. It was an evidence that He who hung on the cross and had been laid into the tomb is living in heaven and that God's omnipotent power was revealed in answer to that Name whom they had hated without a cause. God had promised to Israel His people a Kingdom, the blessings and glories of which prophet after prophet had announced. It was not to be a spiritual Kingdom, but a literal one, with the King of Righteousness ruling in the midst of them. One great Kingdom prophecy in the Old Testament mentions the lame man, too. "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart" (Isaian xxxv: 6). When the King, the Son of David, the Immanuel, had appeared in their midst, preaching the nearness of that kingdom, He manifested His kingly divine power, and the blind saw, the deaf heard and the lame walked. The people rejected Him. And now once more an offer of that Kingdom is to be made to the people. But before the Apostle Peter gives the message he received from the Lord, the rejected One, who had taken His place upon His Father's throne manifests His power once more in the healing of the lame man.

And as this lame man had been perfectly healed, that he not alone walked, but leaped, with songs of praises on his lips, entering the temple, so the Lord was ready and willing to heal His people. The lame man so wonderfully healed, leaping and praising God, is a picture of what the whole nation will be in a future day, when they will look upon Him whom they have pierced (Zechariah xii: 10). God's promise to them, still unfulfilled, is: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgment and do them" (Ezekiel xxxvi: 27). Then will the remnant of His people break forth in singing. "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned

away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation" (Isaiah xii: 1–6). "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah xxxv: 10). The commotion in the temple was great after this miracle had taken place. There could be no mistake about it. The man who had been healed was too well known by the multitude. They recognized him at once. It was the same familiar face, which they had seen again and again at the temple gate. What a change had taken place! His helplessness was completely removed and he leaped along. Instead of the miserable cry of the mendicant, his lips shouted the praises of God. A large multitude came together, greatly wondering. And now Peter opens his lips to speak to the people.

II. Peter's Second Address.

> And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. (Verses 12–16.)

This second address of Peter is characterized by a great calmness. He was not carried away by the great excitement of the astonished multitude. He does not see why they should be astonished at what had happened to the lame

man. For some time greater miracles than the healing of the blind man had been wrought in the midst of them. One had walked among them who had rebuked the demons, opened the eyes of the blind, healed all manners of diseases and raised the dead. Why should they be so astonished at the healing of the lame man?

But they not only gazed with astonishment upon the healed beggar, they also looked with wondering eyes upon the apostles themselves, as if they themselves by their own power or worth performed the healing. This, Peter disclaims. It was God Himself, who had glorified His servant Jesus in the healing of this man. Every word Peter utters, inbreathed by the Holy Spirit, shows the national Jewish character of the address. The Apostle does not speak of God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, but as the God of Abraham, and of Isaac and Jacob. This is God's Name in connection with His covenant people. In vain do we look for this name of God in the rest of the New Testament. For us, as believers, God's Name is revealed as "Our God and our Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then of the Lord, Peter speaks as "His Servant Jesus." The authorized version has "son" instead of servant; but that is wrong. Peter, indeed, knew the Lord as the Son of the living God, for he had confessed Him thus at Caesarea Philippi. The Spirit of God, however, did not suffer him to use the word Son here. It was reserved for another Apostle to make known the full Glory and Sonship, both eternal and by resurrection from the dead, that is, through the Apostle Paul. The first time we find the Lord Jesus Christ preached as Son of God is in Acts ix: 20, and the converted Saul of Tarsus is the preacher. Acts viii: 30, where Philip asks the Eunuch if he believes in the Son of God is an interpolation and must be omitted. In connection with the earth and His people Israel, the Lord is "the servant of God." As such He was predicted and described by Isaiah (chapter xlii) and other

prophets. That servant had been in the midst of His people and Jesus, the Nazarene, was that servant. The God of their Fathers had witnessed to it by healing the lame man; in it God had glorified His servant Jesus.

But what had they done unto that Servant of Jehovah? All their guilt is flashed forth once more. They had delivered Him, and though a Gentile, convinced of His innocence, wanted to let Him go, they had denied Him. That Servant of God was more than innocent, the Holy One and the Righteous One He was and they had denied such a one and chosen a murderer in His place; the Author of Life (Greek: the originator of life; what a title of our blessed Lord!) they had slain. The entire story of their wickedness and guilt is briefly rehearsed and pressed home to their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Could any one of them deny these historical facts?

It is a significant fact that at this time many attempts are being made by the Jews to shift the responsibility of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ upon some one else. The strange thing is that rabbis who attempt to disprove the New Testament record of the part the Jewish people played in the death of the Lord are sometimes admitted into evangelical churches to lay their arguments before Christian people. Recently we received a pamphlet from a rabbi, in which an attempt is made to show that the Jewish people at that time had no share in the death of Christ. Instead of confessing the sin of the nation and the sin of the rejection of the Holy One they try to justify themselves. But the day will come when they will truly mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son (Zechariah xii: 11–13).

Peter likewise refers to the resurrection. God had raised him from the dead and they were the witnesses of His resurrection. Then we hear of His Name as the power which had made the man strong and gave to him this complete

soundness. The power of God had therefore been witnessed by them.

Here we mention briefly the fact that healing of this kind was perfectly in order in connection with the preaching we have here. Nowhere do we read that in connection with the church the gift of healing should be continued. That the Lord has the same power to heal, that His Name is as powerful as ever, none can doubt.

> And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. (Verses 17–18.)

What tenderness and mercy breathe in these words! He addresses them as brethren, but in a different sense as the word brethren is used in the church epistles. As a member of the same nation Peter addressed them thus and offers them mercy. Their guilt could not be denied. All was true what Peter had just uttered; but God in His great mercy is ready to treat their great sin as a sin of ignorance. The Lord had prayed on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And God was now ready to answer this prayer.* Though they had cried: "His blood be upon us and our children," God, in His mercy, delayed the carrying out of this awful wish, uttered by them in their blindness. If they accepted this offered mercy, all their guilt would have been wiped out, but if they rejected and did not repent of what they had done, they set themselves wilfully against God and Him whom He had sent. And Peter now makes His appeal and gives them the promise of God's mercy.

> Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from

*The application of the Cities of Refuge, to which one who had slain a man unwittingly could flee, can easily be made (Joshua xx).

> the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Verses 19–21.)

These are very interesting words and of great importance. They can only be understood in the right way if we do not lose sight of the fact to whom they were addressed, that is to Jews, and not to Gentiles. They are the heart of this discourse, and as such a God-given appeal and promise to the nation. If this is lost sight of, the words must lose their right meaning. The repentance which is demanded of them is an acknowledgment of the wrong they had done in denying the Holy and righteous One, a confession of their blood-guiltiness in having slain the author of life. This, of course, would result in their conversion and the blotting out of their sins as a nation. This God had promised before to the nation. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah xliii: 25). Anticipating that glorious day in which this shall be accomplished, a day still to come, the prophet spoke the following glorious words: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord has done it; shout ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest and every tree therein; for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel" (Isaiah xliv: 22–23).

It is significant that in His second address Peter has nothing more to say about the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is in perfect keeping with the scope of his address. It being national, the blotting out of the sins of that people is mentioned first, and in the next place, the times of refreshing and the second coming of the same Jesus who had been received into heaven. The Holy Spirit had been given and

that for the formation of the church, the body of Christ. The present address of Peter has it to do exclusively with the nation and their future, therefore the Holy Spirit, as He came on the day of Pentecost, is not mentioned. However, the promise of the Spirit in a future outpouring upon that nation is included in the promise, "the times of refreshing."

This term means a future time of blessing which is in store for God's earthly people. The other expression used, "the times of the restitution of all things" means practically the same as the times of refreshing. In these two expressions the Holy Spirit gathers together the hundreds of promises He gave through the different prophets of God, concerning a time of great blessing for His people and through them for the nations of the world. It would be impossible to mention all these promises and in what the times of refreshing and restoration of all things consist. These days of a coming age, the kingdom age, or as we call it, because its duration will be a thousand years, the Millennium, are fully described on the pages of Old Testament prophecy. Not alone will the nation be blessed, but Jerusalem will be a great city, the land will be restored and become the great center for blessing; the nations of the earth will receive blessing and groaning creation will be delivered from its groaning, and the curse which rests upon it. If we interpret the Word of Prophecy literally and cease spiritualizing it, we shall have no difficulty to behold the full meaning of the times of refreshing and the restitution of all things. The latter word does not include a restoration of the wicked dead, a second chance for those who passed out of this life in an unsaved condition. A false teaching refers to this passage as one of the arguments for the restoration of the wicked dead, including even Sodom and Gomorrah. But when did ever a prophet of God teach the restitution of the wicked dead? The prophets predicted the restoration of all things, but that restoration

is clearly defined as concerning the things on the earth and not the beings which have passed out of this life.

Not only in the Old Testament do we find a description of what is to come for Israel, the nations and creation, but elsewhere in the New Testament these times of refreshing and restoration of all things are clearly indicated. See Matthew xix: 28; Romans viii:19–23; Ephesians i: 10, etc. But between these two words of promise of what shall be Israel's portion if they repent, stands another fact: It is the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is a great fundamental passage of that great doctrine, the second coming of Christ. Peter declares that God is going to send Jesus Christ. This must mean a second coming. To teach this in the clearest manner, he adds that the heavens received Him, but they will not retain Him forever. He has gone into the heavens *till* the true restoration of all things comes. The second coming of Christ will result in the times of refreshing and restoration of all things. This event is, of course, His visible and glorious coming back to earth again, to the Mount of Olives from where He ascended, and for the deliverance and blessing of His earthly people. The coming of the Lord for His church as revealed through the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessal. iv: 13–18 must be distinguished from this visible return to the earth. The resurrected and living saints will be caught up together in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, into which the Lord descends when He redeems His promise to His own: "I will come again and receive you unto myself." Of this Peter had no knowledge at all when he delivered this testimony to the nation. What he speaks of is the coming of Christ in power and glory to establish His Kingdom in the midst of His people to extend over the entire earth, so that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters the deep. Of that coming prophets had spoken again and again. Indeed, it is impossible to separate in the prophetic Word the blessings promised

for Israel, the nations and creation and the coming of Christ in glory as the King of kings.

All this is so plain that it seems almost impossible for any man not to see the teaching of the pre-millennial coming of Christ, that there can be no age of blessing, no millennium, before Christ has returned. And yet one of the most learned men and Bible expositor, Dr. John Lightfoot, labors hard to explain away the literal coming of Christ, whom the heavens received. The words of this learned man are the weakest we have ever seen. He says in his *Horae Hebraeicae* on this passage the following: "Was that Jesus, whom we have crucified, the true Christ? (The Jews would ask after hearing Peter.) Then is all our hope for refreshing by the Messiah vanished, because He Himself is vanished and gone. Then our expectation as to the consolation of Israel is at an end, because he who should be our consolation is perished. Not so (saith Peter) but the Messiah, and the refreshing by Him, shall be restored to you if you will repent; yet so that He Himself shall continue in heaven. He shall be sent to you in His refreshing and consolatory Word, and in His benefits if you repent." This great scholar allowed himself a great liberty with the Word of God and teaches the very opposite which Peter spoke to the nation.

The offer of God through Peter and his message to the nation contains the great revealed purposes of God, as spoken by the mouth of His prophets since time began. Sometimes it is asked, What would have happened if the nation had then repented? Undoubtedly all would then have come to pass. In rapid succession all the events preceding the return of the Lord as recorded in the prophets would have come to pass and then He would have come and brought the restoration of all things. This, however, was not in the purpose of God. He knew that Israel would reject this offer. The Lord had predicted it likewise. The

prophets spoke of the dispersion of the nation and a long period of judgment for them.

This period is the present age, during which Israel is set aside nationally, and at the same time God calls out a people for His Name from the Gentiles, that is the church. This may end at any time. We are living in significant days, surrounded by signs which herald the speedy ending of this present age. Then, once more, after the completion and removal of the church from earth, will Israel hear the message concerning the Kingdom. There will then be the repentance of a national remnant, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the times of refreshing and restoration of all things as the result of His coming.

> For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his servant Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. (Verses 22–26)

Next Peter mentions Moses, whom the nation held in such great reverence that they called him, and still do so, "Moses our teacher." Moses had spoken in Deuteronomy of another prophet whom the Lord would raise up. God promised that He would put His words into the mouth of the prophet. "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." (Deut. xviii: 19). The one of whom Moses spoke, one greater than himself, was none other than Christ. That prophet had spoken and they had not heard.

The threatening Word of the Lord was over them as a nation.

Then he reminds them of the testimonies of the prophets beginning with Samuel, who all had announced these days. He closes with an appeal, telling them that they are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant and that it is first to them that God had raised His servant up. He was ready to bless them and turn every one from their iniquity.

This second address of Peter is much shorter than the one delivered by him on the day of Pentecost and yet the brief words, which took a few minutes to deliver, contain the greatest truths. The Name of the Lord is mentioned by Peter in seven different forms, as the Servant of God, the Holy One, the Righteous One, the Author of Life, the Christ of God, the Prophet and the Seed of Abraham. Repentance, Conversion, the Blotting out of sins, the second coming of Christ, the coming age and its blessing, besides the suffering, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ are stated.

But would they heed these solemn words? Do we hear the multitude crying out, "What shall we do?" Do they bow in true repentance? The address of Peter and the words of John, which the Holy Spirit has not put on record, were not finished, when an interruption took place. While they were yet speaking something happened. This we read in the next paragraph, with which the fourth chapter begins.

III. Their Arrest.

> And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. (Chapter iv:1–3).

The large number of people, the news of the healing of

the lame man and that the two men were addressing the people in Solomon's porch, attracted the attention of the priests and the captain of the temple. The latter was a leading figure in the temple with much authority; it is probable that he had a rank next to the high priest. The enemy begins now his acts and the first indication is given that the offer God's mercy was making to the nation would not be accepted. The Holy Spirit was acting mightily through the spoken Word, but these ecclesiastical leaders were hardening their hearts against the Word and the Spirit of God. The hate against that blessed Name broke out anew under the satanic power to which they had yielded. Soon it became evident that blindness is to become their portion. And the Sadducees came too. Though not much has been said on the resurrection, yet these rationalists, or as we would call them today, "higher critics," were much distressed because they preached Jesus and the resurrection. The next step is the arrest and imprisonment of the two apostles. Rough hands seize them. Persecution began. Of the Apostles we read nothing else. They submitted. The power of the Holy Spirit now manifested itself in a new way with them. They could suffer and perhaps with great joy, in perfect peace, they allowed themselves to be taken away.

IV. The Result of the Testimony.

Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. (Verse 4.)

Their labor had not been in vain. God's power had accompanied the Word; a remnant heard and believed. The men are numbered and that is specifically a Jewish thing and a feature of the Kingdom. This is the last time that the converts are numbered. There can be no numbering in this church age; no one knows the number of the members of the body of Christ, but God only. The numbering is only

on Kingdom ground. In the Gospels we have two miraculous draughts of fishes. The one in the Gospel of Luke before the cross where the net broke and the fishes were not numbered refers to the present age. The one in the Gospel of John after the resurrection of Christ, with Peter as leader, when the net did not break and the fishes are numbered, refers to the Kingdom.

CHAPTER IV.

The first few verses of this chapter giving the record of the arrest of the Apostles we expounded in connection with the third chapter to which they properly belong. What became of Peter and John, their appearing before the ecclesiastical authorities and final release, their return to their own company is given in the rest of this chapter. We meditate on it briefly, dividing the chapter into five parts.

I. Peter and John before the rulers, elders, scribes and high-priestly family (Verses 5–7).

II. Peter's bold witness (Verses 8–12).

III. The astonishment of the Sanhedrim, the release of the Apostles (Verses 13–22).

IV. With their own company, their praise and prayer (Verses 23–31).

V. The saved multitude one heart and one soul (Verses 32–37).

1. Peter and John before the rulers.

> And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this? (Verses 5–7.)

The company before whom they were to appear was the Sanhedrim, the same before which the Lord had also appeared. They were gathered in Jerusalem; perhaps the dif-

ferent members which were some distance from the city were summoned to meet in the city. Besides Annas and Caiaphas, John and Alexander are mentioned. Nothing definite is known about these two persons. They were most likely relations of the high priest. Another view is that the John mentioned is a priest who was famous at that time, Rabban Jochanan Ben Zaccai. He lived to a very old age, and it is said of him that forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, when the gates of the temple flew open of their own accord, he predicted that the temple was to be destroyed by fire. Before this company, who no doubt had all gazed in the face of the Lord when He stood before them, the two Apostles had to appear.

We have here the first fulfillment of the many predictions given by our Lord that His beloved disciples were to suffer persecutions. "Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than His Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also" (John xv: 20). "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues" (Matt. x: 16, 17). "But take heed to yourselves; for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten; and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them" (Mark xiii: 9). They had to appear before the council in fulfillment of these predictions. Beaten they were later. In the fifth chapter we read how all the twelve were brought before them, then they were beaten (verse 40), and later other deeds of violence were committed against them. But while these predictions of our Lord were fulfilled then and throughout this entire age, a special end fulfillment is yet to come as it will be seen from the context in Matthew x and Mark xiii. During the great

tribulation with which this age closes Jewish disciples will witness as they did in the beginning and then they will suffer once more as did the Apostles and the Jewish Christians.

Peter and John must have remembered all these words spoken by their departed Lord. The Holy Spirit brought them to their remembrance and filled them with joy and peace. What a privilege theirs was to appear before this ecclesiastical court before which the Lord had appeared! Then, too, the same question which the chief priests and elders had asked the Lord (Luke xx: 1, 2) was now put to them by the same men.

II. Peter's Bold Witness.

> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Verses 8–12.)

Here we have another accomplishment of what the Lord had said. "But when they shall lead you and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit." Even so it was here. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit as he arose to answer. The Holy Spirit then filled him and spoke through him. This third address of Peter reported in this book is as bold and clear as the previous addresses. How else could it be for he was but the mouthpiece of the third person of the Godhead, God the Holy Spirit. It is the briefest address and contains in the

original only ninety-two words. It took a few minutes to deliver, and yet how comprehensive it is. We notice seven things:

1. Peter brings at once forward the deed which had been done, the healing of the infirm man. This was the cause of their arrest and he is now to make known how this man was made whole. He calls the deed "a good deed." They had done nothing evil; there was no occasion whatever for their arrest.

2. The name of the Lord is next mentioned by him. Again He does not speak of Him as the Son of God but as Jesus Christ the Nazaraean; the significance of these three words is as simple as it is interesting. Jesus—that was His name as He walked amongst them; Christ—such He was and is now exalted to the right hand of God; the Nazaraean—His name as the rejected One by His own, a rejection which rested upon these rulers of the nation. And now Peter with a holy boldness accuses the assembled Sanhedrim that they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ: "whom ye have crucified." This was the truth for the Sanhedrim had condemned the Lord. What a change had taken place with Peter. A short time ago he faced a female servant of the high priest, and when that girl accused him of being a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, he denied Him. And now filled with the Holy Spirit he accuses the Sanhedrim in presence of the high priest that, they crucified Jesus. What a contrast with the Peter who had feared that servant.

3. Again the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned in this witness. This was the great object of apostolic preaching: "God had raised Him from the dead."

4. The infirm man had been made sound in his body through the name of Jesus Christ whom they had crucified.

The healing of the lame man was an evidence that the crucified One lives and that He is the Christ. The lame man stood there with the Apostles. This shows that when they were arrested, the healed one was likewise put into prison with them, for he stood up with Peter and John before the Sanhedrim.

5. In the next place Peter quotes the Word of God. The Holy Spirit puts the same Scripture before these rulers, elders and the chief priests, which the Lord had mentioned in their presence. "By what authority doest thou these things?" the same men had asked Him, who now asked His disciples. And the Lord had answered them in parables (Matt. xxi: 23–41). At the close of His second parable, the Gospel of Matthew tells us, the Lord quoted the words to them which Peter now uses in their presence. "Jesus says to them, Have ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which they that builded rejected, has become the corner stone; this is of the Lord and it is wonderful in our eyes? Therefore I say to you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation producing the fruits of it. And he that falls on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder. And the chief priests and the Pharisees having heard His parables, knew that He spoke about them." The One Hundred and Eighteenth Psalm from which the verse of the rejected stone is taken, belongs to the hymn mentioned in Matt. xxvi: 30. It belongs to the Jewish ritual, known by the name of "the great Hallel," still used by the Jews during the Passover celebrations. But neither the modern nor the older Jewish expositors apply the words about the rejected stone to the Christ, their promised Messiah. Some say it refers to David himself, that he was the rejected stone and others apply it to the nation, rejected now but destined to be the corner stone of the nations. But the

Lord had told them that He was the rejected stone mentioned in that Psalm, and here the Holy Spirit presses the same truth home to their hearts. They knew that the Lord meant them when He quoted that verse, that they were the builders, who were to reject Him. They had done so in fulfillment of that prophecy. Peter's words are directed straight at them, "He *is* the stone which has been set at naught by you, the builders."

6. The rejected stone had become the corner stone. The One whom they had delivered up and cast out had been given the prominent place of the corner stone upon whom as the foundation stone everything rests and who unites the building. The truth concerning Him as the corner stone is fully revealed in Ephesians, where we read . . . "Being built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the corner stone, in whom all the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephes. ii:20-22). The Holy Spirit aimed at their conscience. Will they hear and acknowledge their awful mistake in having rejected the Holy One? Will this striking incident of the healing of the lame man convince them that the rejected stone is the corner stone now?

7. Peter closes with the statement tnat salvation is only in Him whom they had set at naught. There is no other Name given to men by which man can be saved, and that is the Name of Him who had made this lame man whole. Salvation they all needed. They, too, rulers, elders, chief priests must be saved. But only in Him God had procured salvation free and complete for all, who will have it by believing on Him. This salvation was offered to these rulers, the builders who had rejected the Lord.

III. The Astonishment of the Sanhedrim and the Release of the Apostles.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done. For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed. (Verses 13–22.)

The rulers, elders, scribes and the high priest were astonished. But they were not astonished at what they had heard; they did not wonder at the divine voice which had spoken to them through an humble Galilean. The whole account shows how these ecclesiastical leaders had hardened their hearts, how they despised that blessed Name which is above every other name. Their astonishment was on account of Peter's and John's boldness. In the presence of this great council, so revered by the whole nation, these two men had uttered a great accusation. They had accused them of having crucified one who not alone was innocent, but who vas the long promised Messiah. Then they were astonished on account of the language and Scripture quotation used. They knew they were illiterate and uninstructed (the

Greek word is *idiots*). How then could a man like Peter speak such wonderful words in so brief a period? Then they recognized them as having been with Jesus, which does not mean, as it is so often said, that they were known by their meek manner or spirituality, that they were in fellowship with the Lord, but they recognized them as having been with the Lord Jesus during the last week in Jerusalem before He suffered and died. But their dilemma is still greater. The healed man, who was above forty years old, stood there. It was impossible to deny that the miracle was not genuine. They had nothing to reply. When they find words it is to request them to go outside so that they might speak together on their case and about the situation. There was no repentance, no willingness to accept what had been so powerfully presented to them. Faster and faster these men were rushing into the outer darkness. Peter, John and the healed man went outside under guard, while inside they discussed their case. But who knew what they said? How did it become known? This is one of the many incidents in the Word of God illustrating what inspiration is. No one reported to Luke what took place in that council chamber nor the other secret things reported in this book. But One saw and heard, and He the Holy Spirit, revealed these secret things to His chosen instrument, the beloved physician, Luke. We learn what happened. They could not deny the miracle. A miracle had taken place. They could not deny it. If there had been a way to deny the healing of that man, they would have done so. Furthermore, we see their wicked impenitent state. Not a word is said by them about the person of Christ. Not one voice is heard to consider the strong witness they had heard. When they mention the Lord's name it is only in connection with forbidding the disciples to use the Name in speaking and teaching. They charged them never to mention that Name again.

The courageous words of the two Apostles need no further comment. In all boldness they declared that they would obey God more than man's word. This holy courage was the product of the indwelling Spirit. And we, too, beloved readers, need such courage as witnesses for our absent Lord. But few of God's people have it and often they fear men and bow to ecclesiastical institutions and leaders, which deny the Holy One of God as much as these rulers and scribes did. The Holy Spirit grant us a greater boldness in these last and evil days, when God calls to contend earnestly for the faith.

The only answer the learned rulers and scribes could give was a renewed threat. They were sorry that they could not punish them. They did not dare to lay hands on them on account of the people. Too many knew what had taken place, and God was glorified by those who had been witnesses of the healing of the lame man. The great ecclesiastical council was the coward.

IV. With their own company; their praise and prayer.

And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which has made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spake the Word of God with boldness. (Verses 23–31.)

With great joy they must have turned towards the place where their own company assembled. We do not understand by this expression only the Apostles, but it was a much larger gathering. The news of the arrest of Peter and John must have reached them soon after it took place. And as the assembly made increasing prayer for Peter, when Herod had cast him into prison (xii:5) so in all probability were they continuing in prayer for the two Apostles, who were later called "pillars of the church" (Gal. ii:). There must have been great joy when they appeared again with them. A report is given of what had taken place and what the chief priests and elders had demanded of them. No idle discussion follows; no schemes or plans are made how to act with this injunction against their speaking in His Name. They did something far better and grander. Hezekiah, the good king, when he had received the threatening words of Rabshakek, the mouthpiece of Sennacherib, the Assyrian king (2 Kings xix), laid the whole matter before the Lord. So this company in their perplexity turns to the Lord in prayer. It concerned God and His Christ, His holy servant Jesus; Him they are willing to glorify by serving or suffering. While they had made the positive declaration to the assembled rulers that they could not and would not keep silence, they now ask counsel of the Lord. The precious lessons and instructions we receive from this fact are not difficult to discover. The Holy Spirit leads to prayer, and prayer is the expression of dependence on the Lord.

With one accord they lift up their voice to God. This does not mean that they all prayed at once. That would have been confusion. Disorder in meetings, a number of people talking at the same time in a boisterous way with outward demonstrations, is an evidence that the Holy Spirit is not leading, for God is not a God of disorder, but of peace (1 Cor. xiv:33). Most likely Peter uttered the words of prayer and the rest followed in their hearts with one accord.

God is addressed as the Lord (Master) and God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. Later after the complete revelation of the Gospel of the Son of God, prayer is addressed to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the proper way now to address God. Nowhere in this book is a prayer addressed to the Holy Spirit. Nowhere in the Epistles do we find a prayer addressed to the third person in the Godhead or an exhortation to pray for His coming. Prayer to the Holy Spirit or for Him by those who are indwelt by Him (as every true Christian is) is not scriptural. We also do not find anywhere in this Book of the Acts that the Apostles or the other disciples ever prayed the so-called "Lord's prayer;" that is the "Our Father." That form of prayer had been given to the disciples for a certain time only. Before He left them He had, so to speak, cancelled that form of prayer. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full" (John xvi:24). Prayer is to be made in His Name in the power of His Spirit.

The foundation of this first recorded prayer in the Acts is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit brings the Word to their minds and with that Word before their hearts they utter their petition. This is the true way of prayer. Daniel prayed in this way as well as others. The Scripture which is mentioned is the Second Psalm. Throughout the New Testament the prophetic importance of that great collection of inspired prayers and songs of praise, the Book of Psalms, is seen. The Second Psalm is a great prophecy. The Psalm itself bears no title nor the name of the instrument through whom it was given. Here in this prayer we learn that David by the Holy Spirit is the author of this Psalm. The Psalm begins with a prediction that the Gentiles were to oppose the Lord and His anointed, that is Christ. And here we see a *partial* fulfilment of this prophecy. Herod, Pontius

Pilate, the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel had indeed gathered together in that city to do what the hand and the counsel of the Lord had determined before should come to pass. The Anointed of the Lord had been rejected and refused. The Gentiles had an equal share in it. The rulers of the peoples of Israel had given command that His blessed Name should no more be mentioned. All was pre-determined by God, which, of course, did not clear them from responsibility and guilt. It is an interesting fact that the text of the Second Psalm does not show that His own people Israel were to have part in that rejection. But this does not exhaust the prophetic meaning of the Second Psalm. The rejection of the Christ of God by the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel in the beginning of this age is only the prelude to the greater rejection of the Lord at the end of the age. Then the kings of the earth will form a great confederacy and say: "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." This will be followed by the great event which is so clearly revealed in the Second Psalm, the Coming of the King to rule over these nations and to break them with a rod of iron. The rejected Christ will be enthroned as King upon the holy hill of Zion. Of Him the Lord will declare: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." (In resurrection from the dead.) Only then will the Second Psalm be fulfilled.

With such a word before their hearts opened to their vision by the Holy Spirit while they were praying, they can come boldly to the Lord. They implore Him to look upon their threatenings. He knew all. But their prayer was not that their enemies might be destroyed nor that they might be delivered from further attacks. Their prayer was for boldness to speak the Word. They cast themselves upon the Lord for Grace and help. They also ask, which was perfectly in order on the ground they occupied, that His hand might be outstretched to heal and that signs and

wonders take place through the name of His holy servant Jesus. Such a prayer which concerned only the Lord and His Glory could not remain unanswered. The answer came at once. The place was shaken; they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness. The outward sign was that the place in which they assembled was shaken. The Lord and God, the Creator, manifested His power. It was no doubt a shaking of the earth, and in connection with the prediction of the Second Psalm, this is likewise significant. As that place was shaken, so, in the future, when the kings and the nations of the earth are in complete opposition to God and His Christ, heaven and earth will be shaken, when the King of king returns.*

The filling with the Holy Spirit was not another outpouring or Baptism. He filled them anew. "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. v:18) is the word to us, and He will fill us if our constant aim is in word and deed to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. The filling with the Holy Spirit manifested itself by their boldness in speaking the Word of God. They had great courage and liberty preaching the good news in the blessed Name of the Lord.

V. The saved multitude one heart and one soul.

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he

*Compare the outward signs on the day of Pentecost and the shaking of the place with 1 Kings xix:11, 12. Four outward signs were present when the Lord passed by Elijah: Wind, earthquake, fire and the still small voice. So at Sinai.

had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation), a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. (Verses 32–37.)

A fresh glimpse is given to us of the assembly in Jerusalem. The first description we had at the close of the second chapter. After the great events recorded in the third and fourth chapters we behold again the happy condition of the multitude who had believed. This is a precious picture once more. There was a divine oneness among them. While in the second chapter we are told that they sold their substance and possessions, here we read that not one said that anything of what he possessed was his own. They realized that their real possessions were now in a better place, no longer on earth, but in heaven. A marvellous change had taken place from the earthly calling and hope of the Jew, to the heavenly calling and heavenly hope. It is true the full revelation of the heavenly had not yet been given, but what they knew of Christ, His resurrection and His place at the right hand of God was sufficient to detach them from earthly things. It was the Holy Spirit who made this so real to them, and through His power they were enabled to bear such a witness to the truth. That the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is again mentioned in these verses shows the prominence this great event held in their hearts. It was this which separated them and on account of which great grace was upon them all. Well may we remember here the words of the Apostle with which he begins the practical part of that Epistle, which reveals the glory of our risen and exalted Lord. "If, therefore, ye have been raised with Christ, seek the things which are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; have your mind on the things which are above, not on the things that are on the earth; for ye have died and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ is manifested, who is our life,

then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory" (Col. iii:1–3). The great truth of the resurrection and exaltation of Christ and that we are raised with Him and belong there where He is can do only one thing and that is, wean us away from the things on earth. How much this ought to be the case in these last days when the Lord's Coming is so near.

In consequence of having all things in common, want and poverty were unknown amongst them. The need of all was supplied. All this was for a purpose. It was a great testimony to the nation. It lasted for but a brief period. We do not find it again. The next chapter begins with a "but" and shows how the sweet picture was marred by the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. In the sixth chapter we have the record of the murmuring one against the other. Thus failure soon came in. On Gentile ground we find nowhere these conditions as given in these verses.

One is mentioned especially, Joses Barnabas, as he had been named by the Apostles, the Son of Consolation. He was a Levite, born in the island of Cyprus. He was a well-to-do man, and had relations in Jerusalem, for John Mark was his cousin. The Grace of God enabled him to sell the land he possessed. How richly he was blessed and how the Lord chose him for an instrument we shall find later.

CHAPTER V.

The contents of this chapter are as follows: (1) The manifestation of evil in the church; Ananias and Sapphira (verses 1–10). (2) Signs and wonders by the hands of the Apostles (verses 11–16). (3) The second arrest of the Apostles and their miraculous deliverance (verses 17–25). (4) Before the council; the defense of the Apostles, Peter's renewed witness (verses 25-34). (5) Gamaliel's advice (verses 34–39). (6) The Apostles beaten, dismissed from the council but continuing teaching and preaching the glad tidings (verses 40–42).

I. The Manifestation of evil in the church; Ananias and Sapphira.

But a certain man, Ananias by name with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and put aside for himself part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, laid it at the feet of the apostles. But Peter said, Ananias, Ananias, why has Satan filled thy heart that thou shouldest lie to the Holy Spirit, and put aside for thyself a part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? and sold was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down and expired; and great fear came upon all who heard it. And the young men, rising up, wound him up for burial, and having carried him out, buried him. And it came to pass about three hours afterward, that his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. And Peter answered her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his

feet and expired. And the young men came in and found her dead, and, having carried her out, they buried her by her husband. (Verses 1–10.)

Up to this chapter we have beheld a beautiful picture of the work of the Holy Spirit in the gathering of those who had believed and their fellowship, as well as in the bold testimony of the Apostles. The acts of the Holy Spirit in His mighty power are fully demonstrated in the second, third and fourth chapters of this book of Exodus of the New Testament. Then we likewise saw how the enemy began to act in the arrest of Peter and John.

With this chapter the scene changes. Beautiful is the ending of the previous chapter, Barnabas having sold his land, laid the money at the feet of the Apostles. He gave by it a striking testimony how he realized as a believing Jew his heavenly portion, by giving up that which is promised to the Jew, earthly possessions.

Our chapter begins with the significant word "But." It is the word of failure and decline. All was evidently perfect; nothing marred the precious scenes of fellowship—"but" and with this little word the story of evil begins. The enemy seeing himself so completely defeated by his attacks from the outside now enters among the flock and begins his work within.

The instruments were Ananias and Sapphira, man and wife. They too had an estate, which they sold. They had before hand agreed to surrender only a part of the money they received from the sale, the balance they were keeping back for themselves. It was deception they had deliberately planned. Behind it stood unbelief; they did not realize in faith that God Himself in the person of His Spirit had made His abode in the assembly of which they were a part. They did not consider this stupendous fact that the Holy Spirit had come and was present in the gathered company. But what was the motive? The surrender of possessions as done

by Barnabas was entirely voluntary. No one had asked Ananias and Sapphira to do the same thing. The motive was selfishness. Barnabas had done a good deed in obeying the Holy Spirit and no doubt he received praise and blessing for it. This moved Ananias and Sapphira to jealousy and they desired to have the same reputation. But their hearts were covetous; they loved the earthly things and they did not want to part with all the purchase money. Human glory and money were the downfall of Ananias and his wife. They were doubleminded. The Spirit of God was working in great power, but what they manifested was an imitation, hypocrisy, a lie.* Satan himself had filled the heart of Ananias using his flesh to commit this sin of lying to the Holy Spirit. Satan had begun his work in the midst of the gathered company and he worked through the flesh of those who had believed on the Lord. Swift judgment followed as to their earthly existence. They were cut off by death. The sin they had done was " a sin unto death " and the sentence, physical death, was immediately carried out. Peter is still in the foreground. We must remember here the words of the Lord which He spake to Peter, after this disciple had confessed Him as Son of God. " And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven " (Matthew xvi:19). The same words concerning binding and loosing the Lord addressed to all the disciples (Matthew xviii:18). The binding and loosing refers to discipline on earth. It has nothing whatever to do with forgiveness of sins or eternal salvation. Peter here exercises this authority, it was the first discipline. We must like-

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*There is an interesting correspondency between the sin of Achan, the first failure reported after Israel entered the land, and the sin of Ananias and Sapphira.

wise remember that these events happened on Jewish, on kingdom ground. The witness was still to the nation. The sudden judgment which came upon Ananias and Sapphira was a strong witness to the nation that the Holy One of Israel, Jehovah, dwelt in the midst of this remnant, who believed in the One whom the nation had rejected. When the kingdom is established on earth and the Lord Jesus Christ rules in righteousness, then, no doubt every sin will be swiftly judged by death. If it is asked why such judgments do no longer occur, we answer that the Holy Spirit then was ungrieved; now the Spirit is grieved on account of unfaithfulness and God no longer acts in this way to bear testimony to His presence in the church. Besides this it is nowhere stated that such manifestations of His presence were to continue. If God would thus act in judgment in every case of doublemindness, unfaithfulness and sinning against the Holy Spirit, it would be contrary to one great characteristic of this present age. That is " the silent heavens." The many misguided people, who think they have gone back to Pentecost, have received their Pentecost, speak with new tongues, that the gift of tongues and of doing miracles is restored to them and that they are now once more in " apostolic times," should also expect such judgments in their midst.

There are some important lessons to be gathered from this solemn event which we cannot pass by.

(1) The fact of the presence of the flesh in the believer. Ananias and Sapphira were believers. They gave way to follow the flesh, and Satan came in with his power and tempted them. The doctrine of the eradication of the old nature by having received " the baptism with the Holy Spirit " is unscriptural.

In this case of Ananias and Sapphira it is fully demonstrated what is written in the Epistle to the Galatians " For

the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things ye would " (Gal. v:17).

(2) The power of Satan is revealed in the event. What Ananias and Sapphira did was suggested to them by Satan. Vain glory was in their hearts; they followed pride to win fame and get the praise from man. They had the root of all evil " the love of money " in their hearts and yielded to it. Acting thus in the flesh Satan came and suggested the lie to them. Their eyes were then blinded and they lost sight of the great truth so well known to them that He who is " perfect in knowledge " dwelt in them and in the midst of the congregation as Jehovah had dwelt in the midst of Israel.

(3) The event bears witness to the fact that the Holy Spirit is not an influence but a divine person, He is God. Ananias had lied to the Holy Spirit. Peter tells him " Thou hast not lied to men but to God." To tempt the Holy Spirit is to tempt God and to lie to the Spirit is a lie to God.

(4) All sin of the Christian believer is now against the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer and whenever the believer walks not in the Spirit but in flesh, when he is carnally minded, the believer sins against the Holy Spirit. Satan has then an advantage over him. But thanks be to God for His gracious provision! We can judge ourselves and confess our sins (not to the Holy Spirit but to God), and He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us.

5. The presence of the Holy Spirit demands separation from evil. If believers would recognize the great truth, believe it fully that the Holy Spirit dwells in them, they would walk in the Spirit and be separated from evil. With all the singing about the Holy Spirit, the teaching and the

great amount of scriptural literature on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but few believers enjoy the reality of the presence of the Spirit of God and are governed by it. Those who are the Lord's must be separated from evil of every form. One has well said: "In the first days of the Holy Spirit He took out what dishonored Him. In later days He called upon the assembly to act, to purge out the leaven, to 'put away' that wicked person" (1 Cor. v). In these last days, when the whole has become leavened with legality, worldliness, hypocrisy, sensuality, ritualism and rationalism, the faithful are to come out from among them and be separate, to follow righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart (that is unmixed with any evil). In Israel Jehovah judged in the beginning, at once and severely, for "holiness becometh His house forever." But in later days, when all had gone aside, and they who regarded Him were but few they were told to stand apart from the whole. The condition of the professing company may change, but the grand principle remains. The holiness of His presence excluding and separating us from evil."

Oh that God's people in these solemn days, when judgment is so near, may hear the call of the Holy Spirit in the last Pauline Epistle, the epistle which so clearly describes the present apostasy, Second Timothy. It is His call to separation from evil (2 Tim. ii:20, 21; iii:5).

II. The Signs and Wonders done by the Hands of the Apostles.

> And great fear came upon all the church, and upon all who heard these things. And by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch, but of the rest durst no man join them, but the people magnified them; and believers were more than ever added to the Lord, multitudes (both of men and women); so that they brought out the sick into the streets and put them on beds

and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter, when he came, might overshadow some of them. And the multitudes also of the cities round about came together to Jerusalem, bringing sick persons beset by unclean spirits, who were all healed. (Verses 11–16.)

Signs and wonders were done by the Apostles. Their habitual place seems to have been in Solomon's porch. No one dared to join them. They held the position of authority. Though they had been forbidden the public ministry they are back in a prominent place. The people magnified them, too. Then another result was that more believers were added. Added to what? The First Hebrew Christian Church of Jerusalem? The First Jewish Christian Society? No. They were added to the Lord. The sinner believing is saved, receives the Holy Spirit, is joined to the Lord, becomes one spirit with the Lord, a member of the body of which He is the Head. Signs and wonders were done by the Apostles. The sick were healed, unclean spirits were driven out. Multitudes of people from the surrounding country flocked to Jerusalem, bringing their sick, and they were all healed. The streets presented another strange picture. Everywhere one could see the sick on beds and couches. They waited for the time when Peter walked through these streets so that his shadow might fall on some of them. These were great manifestations of the power of God. The words spoken by the Lord were then fulfilled. They did the works He did. These signs and wonders, however, are nowhere mentioned as to their permanency throughout this age. They were only for the beginning of this age; after the Gospel of Grace and the mystery hidden in former ages had been fully made known they disappeared. It has been said of late that "God's gifts and calling are without repentance" and that therefore God has not taken back the sign gifts and the extraordinary powers as manifested here in this chapter in connection with the testimony to Israel. The reader must remember that the verse concerning the gifts and calling of God is written in

Romans xi and has no application in connection with this age but refers us to Israel's calling.

Nor has God promised for the end of this age a restoration of these gifts. When certain men, claiming to be great teachers of the Word, speak of "the latter rain," great spiritual blessings coming in the end of this age, they but reveal their ignorance. Nowhere is there found such a pronise. The testimony of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament holds out no hope for a restoration of gifts, but His testimony tells us of apostasy, departure from the faith, and delusions. There will be "signs and wonders" in the end of the age. But these signs and wonders will be the most awful imitations of the power of the Holy Spirit; signs and lying wonders are predicted through the working of Satan. These have already commenced, but the real working of Satan will begin after the true church is removed from the earth (2 Thess. ii).

III. The Second Arrest of the Apostles and their Miraculous Deliverance.

And the high priest rising up, and all they that were with him, which is the sect of the Saduccees, were filled with wrath, and laid hands on the Apostles and put them in the public prison. But an angel of the Lord during the night opened the doors of the prison, and leading them out, said, Go ye and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. And when they heard it, they entered very early into the temple and taught. And when the high priest was come, and they that were with him, they called together the council and all the senate of the children of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came they found them not in the prison and returned and reported, saying, We found the prison shut with all safety and the keepers standing without before the doors, but when we had opened we found no man within. And when they heard these words, both the priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests were in perplexity as to them, what this would come to. Then came one and reported to them saying, Behold the men whom

ye put in prison are standing in the temple teaching the people (Verses 17–25.)

The startling manifestations of the Holy Spirit in signs and miracles brought forth another and more severe action of the enemy. The second arrest of the bold witnesses is marked by greater hatred and violence than the first arrest. The Apostles were treated like common criminals and were put into the public prison. The Sadducees, the deniers of the resurrection and the miraculous, are mostly concerned in this second arrest. Their miserable unbelief had been endangered by the supernatural manifestations and these again fully demonstrated the great truth they were denying, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They were filled with jealousy (the word used in the Greek). But there was another manifestation of the power of God. During the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison and led them out. They were delivered by divine interference through the power of God by a heavenly messenger. Critics have denied this. One recently has made the statement that the phrase "angel of the Lord" must be understood, "as a Hebraic expression for some divine intervention, the manner of which is not defined. It may have been connivance on the part of an officer, or the help of a friend." Such weak statements need no answer. We shall find the appearance of heavenly messengers again. It was an angel of the Lord who guided Philip, who liberated Peter out of prison, and who smote Herod when he blasphemed (Acts xii). In the Old Testament we find "the angel of the Lord" (Malach Jehovah) and He is an uncreated angel, the Lord Himself. But here it is a heavenly messenger. He appeared, no doubt, in the form of man, like the two at the ascension of the Lord. Such a manifestation of angels was perfectly in order at that time, and fully corresponds with the other kingdom characteristics in the beginning of the Book of Acts. But the supernatural manifestations soon ceased. Hundreds and thousands

of others throughout this present age were put into prison, they remained in dungeons, were slowly tormented, walled up to die a slow death, eaten by vermin, all for righteousness sake, and yet no angels came to open their doors and lead them forth. With this we do not say that the angels have no ministry now toward us. This would be contrary to Scripture (Hebrews i: 14). But visible manifestations of heavenly messengers have ceased like the miraculous sign gifts. It will not always be so. The heavens will speak again and there will be startling manifestations on judgment through angels and with the beginning of the coming age, angels will be manifested once more, and God's power and glory will be visibly displayed.

The delivering angel had also commissioned the Apostles to speak the words of life to all the people. This they did at once with the early morning. The assembled council is in great perplexity when the prison is found empty and the report reaches them, that the men are again standing in the temple teaching the people. Yet this evident miracle does not bring them to their knees to acknowledge the power of God.

IV. Their Trial and Witness before the Council.

Then went the captain with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. And they brought them and set them in the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, We strictly enjoined you not to teach in this Name, and behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and purpose to bring upon us the blood of this man. But Peter, answering, and the Apostles said, God must be obeyed rather than man. The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree (lit. wood, that is a cross). Him did God exalt by His right hand as a Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things, and the Holy Spirit also, whom God has given to them that obey Him. When they heard that, they were cut to the heart and took counsel to kill them. (Verses 26–33.)

With cowardly fear they led them into the presence of the council. They did not dare to use violence as this might have resulted in an open outbreak from the side of the people, who heard the Apostles gladly. Two charges are brought now against them. They had broken the command of the council. They had been forbidden to speak in this Name and they had continued to do so, utterly disregarding the injunction. This was the first charge and it was true enough. The second charge was but the working of their guilty conscience. They accused them that they purposed to bring this man's blood upon them. They feared that the people stirred up by their teaching, might take them to task for having condemned Jesus of Nazareth. But another fact stands behind this fear. The people had cried "His blood be on us and on our children." The leaders of the people were responsible for this awful word. They must have remembered it and they feared that this might soon be true in open vengeance from the side of the people against them. It is also a remarkable fact that they themselves do not speak the name of the Lord. They speak of Him as "this man" and "this name."

Once more we find the record of the apostolic testimony. It does not differ from the previous bold and powerful witnesses given. After the statement that God must be obeyed rather than man, we find three great facts mentioned by Peter:

1. The Jesus, whose Name they were loath to pronounce, whom God had raised up, they had slain and hanged on a cross. This fully establishes their guilt. Once more the blood guiltiness is brought home to their consciences.

2. The exaltation of Jesus is mentioned next. Raised from the dead, exalted by the right hand of God, He is a Prince and Saviour. In His Name repentance is offered to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

3. The third part of this brief and logical defense concerns the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. They were witnesses of these things, and also the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit is now bestowed upon them that obey Him, that is, who believe God. The Holy Spirit was upon them and in them, and with them as a believing company. The witness concerned the three great facts so prominent in the beginning of this book, the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, because the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified, highly exalted. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are thus mentioned. The Gospel is mentioned. Forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit is for them that obey, believe in Him, whom God has exalted as Prince and Saviour. Surely this is a fulfillment of that word the Lord spoke to His disciples, when He predicted future events. "But when they deliver you up, be not careful how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given to you in that hour what ye shall speak" (Matt. x: 19).

But what was the result of this other powerful witness of the Apostles by the power of the Holy Spirit? Are they humbling themselves? Does perhaps this stirring testimony backed up by divine interference in the release of the Apostles from the prison make them thoughtful? No. The witness went to the heart; it struck home. But instead of repenting they took counsel to kill them. The story of their Lord is repeated, for they also took counsel to kill them, in order to silence His testimony. Under the control of him, who is a murderer from the beginning they are ready to shed more blood. What might have happened if Gamaliel had not stood up, none can tell. Perhaps they were ready then to rush upon them as later they rushed upon Stephen to murder him.

V. The Advice of Gamaliel (Verses 34–39).

But a certain man, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, held in honor of all the people, rose up in the council and com-

manded to put the Apostles out for a little while, and he said to them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do as touching these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, alleging himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves and who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to naught. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the census, and drew away a number of people after him; he also perished and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now I say unto you, Withdraw from these men and let them alone; for if this council or this work be of men, it will come to naught. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. (Verses 34–39.)

Gamaliel was undoubtedly an instrument of God to restrain the wicked devices of the council. But who was Gamaliel? The text itself gives the answer, a great man and teacher of the law. He is called in Hebrew writings Rabban Gamaliel the Old. His name means "bestowed of God." He was president of the council after his own father, Rabban Simeon, who was the son of Hillel. He is the great teacher at whose feet Saul of Tarsus sat. He died eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and died a Pharisee. If his advice here seems that he favored the Apostles, his subsequent career shows that he followed the wicked devices of his contemporaries. A prayer against the heretics (the believers in the Lord) was later formulated to be read in the synagogues, and he fully approved of it and recommended its use. The advice he gave is so well known and the words so simple that they need no further comment. His advice is, leave them alone. Wait for the issue. If it is of God, you then fight against God. If it is of man, like similar movements before, it will come to nought. God will take care of His own honor; there would be no need of their interfering. God rules supreme. But this advice has also another side. It was after all nothing but a cowardly way to dodge the issue by waiting for light by the issue itself. Ever

since up to the present time men have hidden themselves behind the wisdom of Gamaliel. If certain movements spring up which are doubtful and contain erroneous teachings contradicting the revelation of God, we hear people say that they are content to wait for the issue. If the movement is of God it will stand, if it is of man it will come to nought. But what in the meantime? If it does not become apparent at once whether it is of God or of the enemy? There is no need to follow this clever advice of the great Jewish teacher. We are in possession of the completed Word of God and must test everything by it. There is no need to halt between two opinions. Evil can be detected and must be judged. But that the council acted upon this in hypocrisy is seen by what follows. And yet we must not lose sight of the fact that God used this politic advice of Gamaliel to keep His disciples in that hour of grave peril.

VI. The Release of the Apostles. Their Continued Testimony.

> And to him they agreed; and when they had called the Apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house they ceased not to teach and announce the glad tidings that Jesus is Christ. (Verses 40, 42.)

Nothing of all this was known to the Apostles for they had been outside while Gamaliel delivered his address. The Holy Spirit through Luke gives the full account of what had been done under cover. The council agreed. But if they agreed, why did they beat the Apostles? It surely was contrary to the agreement. They should have let them go without laying their hands on them, but wait for the issue. If these men were right, then according to Gamaliel's word they were fighting against God. This was, of course, the

case. The beating was according to Deut. xxv: 2, 3. They were treated as wicked men and received the allotted number of stripes, forty save one. Physical suffering and shame was connected with this mode of punishment. This was the first actual suffering of the Apostles for the Name, which is above every other name. Then we see them departing. It was a departure in triumph; they were more than conquerors. If we could have seen them with their bleeding backs, we would not have beheld faces full of rebellion and pain, but we would have seen joyous countenances and heard words of praise from their lips, as later Paul and Silas sang and praised in prison. It was the Holy Spirit who filled them and made them rejoice "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name." Later the Holy Spirit speaks of suffering for Christ through Peter in a way which is so refreshing. "But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of Glory and of God resteth upon you, on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified" (1 Pet. iv: 13, 14). Thus His Spirit rested upon them and they rejoiced. How little we know of such experiences in our own days!

And then they continued. Nothing could hinder them. What a divine steadfastness was theirs. It was the result of the presence of the Holy Spirit in them. He was ungrieved because they exalted Christ and magnified Him. A wonderful activity they unfolded. It was indeed true what the council had said. All Jerusalem was filled by their doctrine. The work they did continually was not the working of miracles, or speaking in strange tongues. Some deluded Christians of our times seem to think that these outward signs were the chief things in the beginning of the age. They were not. Greater than doing miracles and speaking in other tongues

is that, through which the body of Christ is gathered and edified. This is the preaching of the Gospel and the teaching of the Word. This they did. They did not cease teaching and preaching the glad tidings (the Gospel), that Jesus is Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

This chapter has two parts. In the first part (verses 1–7) we find the record of the murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, and how this difficulty was overcome. In the second part (verses 8–15) Stephen, one of the seven chosen, is in the foreground. This part properly belongs to the chapter which follows, in which Stephen's great address before the council and his glorious martyrdom is revealed.

I. The Murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews.

But in those days, when the number of disciples multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians (Hellenists) against the Hebrews, because their widows were overlooked in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples, and said, It is not right that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may establish over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they have prayed, they laid *their* hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Verses 1–7.)

Another failure is brought before us. The enemy acts again. From without and from within Satan pressed upon that which was of God. While the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit acted in Grace and power, the enemy came in to disturb. It is still so. Whenever there is a door opened there are also many adversaries (1 Cor. xvi: 9).

The flesh manifested itself in murmuring. The assembly took care of the poor; widows being specially helpless, were the objects of daily ministrations. The Jews themselves in connection with the synagogue had special funds for them. They must have also formed a recognized group in the early church (1 Tim. v:9, 10). The ministration is the distribution mentioned in Chapter iv:35, and as the multitude was very great, including, perhaps, hundreds of widows, this work was quite a task. Murmurings arose and these were born of jealousy, the result of unbelief. It is the first indication of weakness and failure. This reminds us of the murmurings of Israel as recorded in the book of Exodus. The same old thing, the changeless flesh, shows itself among the saved and united company of believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The murmurings were on the side of the Grecians. Their complaint was against the Hebrews that the Grecian widows were being overlooked. The Grecians were not, as some teach, Gentiles, but they were Greek-speaking Jews, born in countries outside of Palestine, and therefore called Hellenists, or Grecians. Between these two classes, the native and foreign-born Jews, there existed considerable jealousy. This rivalry was introduced in the assembly. The Hebrew distributors were accused of overlooking the Grecians.

But the murmuring was arrested at once. A divine Person was present, the One perfect in wisdom, the Holy Spirit. As He was ungrieved in their midst, He at once meets the need of the assembly. The murmuring could not advance nor do its pernicious work in dividing the people. Later the Holy Spirit especially warns against murmuring. "Let all things be done without murmurings and disputings" (Phil. ii). Murmurings belong to the works of the flesh and will lead to the things mentioned in Galatians v: "hatred, strifes, jealousies, angers, contentions, disputes, parties and envyings." Alas! how sad is the condition of Christian churches

at the present time in this respect. If believers walk in humility, in self-judgment, esteeming the other higher than themselves, and are controlled by the mind which was in Christ Jesus, all those things would not be. Any murmuring, if it arises through the weakness of the flesh, would at once be cut short by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God, who had, as reported in the previous chapter, acted in judgment by removing the two transgressors, now acts in divine grace.

The twelve called the assembly together. As the murmuring of Israel in the wilderness was mostly directed against Moses and Aaron, their divinely-appointed leaders, so the murmuring here was in a certain measure against the Apostles, at whose feet was laid the price of what had been sold. There is no word of rebuke from the side of the Apostles. Neither do we read of any arguments they used. They act guided by the Holy Spirit. Their great calling and gift was the ministry of the Word; they had been obliged to serve tables more or less. They discerned at once that the Lord had not called them to this double service. Here is another evidence of the existence of the church. The Holy Spirit who had united them at the day of Pentecost into one body, now begins to point out the order in that body. All of this, concerning the different gifts to the members of the body, is not revealed here, but is found in the doctrinal Epistles of the Apostle to the Gentiles, to whom the ministry of the church was committed.

Seven men, the Holy Spirit directs through the Apostles, are to be selected from among the assembly. Three conditions are mentioned. They must be men of good report, esteemed by all on account of their character, they must be full of the Spirit, and possess wisdom. The Apostles themselves declared: "we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." The Holy Spirit thus separated the gifts called to minister in spiritual things,

from the ministry of temporal matters. What confusion there exists in this respect at the present time in the professing church, needs hardly to be pointed out.

In this word of the Apostles, there is an important statement concerning prayer and the ministry of the Word. It is not the ministry of the Word, teaching and preaching, first, but they put prayer into the first place. There can be no effectual ministry, no effectual preaching of the Gospel and Bible teaching unless it is preceded by prayer. Prayer is the expression of dependence upon God. Ministry of the Word must be in utter dependence on the Lord and therefore prayer is the right preparation for it.

Then the multitude, that is the entire assembly, chose the seven men, while the Apostles sanctioned their choice. Stephen is mentioned first, and described as a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. Then follow the names of the others, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas. The latter was a proselyte, that is, one who had adopted Judaism by circumcision; he was from Antioch. There is absolutely no historical proof that this Nicolas formed later a special sect and that he taught wicked doctrines. His name can in nowise be connected with the Nicolaitanes in Revelation ii: 6 and 15.

While we know little of these men and the service they rendered, with the exception of Stephen and Philip, it is an interesting fact that their names are all Greek. In this the grace of God is beautifully exhibited. The Grecians were the murmurers, and no doubt they were fewer in number than the Hebrews. A modern day church meeting would have proposed to elect a committee composed of equal numbers of the two parties. But not so here.

Grace and wisdom from above are manifested in this action. The entire seven were chosen from those who had complained. This was the blessed rebuke of Grace. The weakness and failure is made an occasion to bring out such

graciousness. Into the hands of those who had murmured is given the distribution of the funds. This silenced the murmurings at once.

The seven were then set before the Apostles and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. This is the first time we find the laying on of hands in the Book of Acts. As this "laying on of hands" is so much misunderstood, and has been made an act by which authority, power and blessing is claimed to be conferred, we must say a brief word on it. It is always proper in reading and interpreting the Word of God, to see if not elsewhere in the Bible the terms or things to be interpreted are used, so that through them the right meaning can be ascertained. The laying on of hands is first mentioned in the Book of Leviticus. In the opening chapters of that book we read how the offerer was to lay his hand upon the head of the offering. Thus we read of the Peace offering: "He shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering" (Lev. iii:2). This meant the identification of the Israelite with the offering itself. And this is the *only* meaning of the laying on of hands from the side of the Apostles. They identified themselves and the assembly with them in their work for which they had been chosen. It was a very simple and appropriate act to show their fellowship with them. All else which has been made of the laying on of hands is an invention. There is no Scripture for the present day usage in Christendom, that a man in order to preach the Gospel or teach the Word of God must be "ordained." We shall return to this when we reach other parts of this book.

The Word of God increased. The Holy Spirit gave it power, and after this victory when the enemy attempted to disturb the assembly by the murmuring, He unfolded great energy. The number of disciples increased greatly and especially is it mentioned that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. The latter was appar-

ently a new thing. No priests were mentioned before. May not the rent veil have had something to do with this great company of priests believing in the Lord Jesus Christ? They had found the new and living way into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.

The office of the seven, we may add, was only of a short duration, for soon persecution of the worst type set in and the disciples were scattered.

II. Stephen, his ministry and arrest.

> And Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council. And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. (Verses 8–15.)

With Stephen we reach an important stage in this book. The testimony, as given to Israel, is now soon to be closed and Stephen is the instrument chosen to deliver the most striking testimony to the representatives of the nation. Of the history of this remarkable man we know but little. As already seen, his name indicates that he was a Hellenist; Stephen means "crown." And he is indeed to have a great crown in the day when the Lord will take the award seat and His saints will appear before Him. We learned before that he was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. He is, so to speak, the link between Peter and Paul; most significantly, at

the close of Stephen's great witness and after his vision of the Glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, there is mentioned a young man named Saul, "and Saul consented unto his death."

Here in the sixth chapter we read that Stephen was "full of grace and power," the effect of faith, and filled with the Spirit. He is the first disciple mentioned who is not an apostle, who did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then we see those of the synagogues of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, disputing with him. These were also Hellenists, Jews brought up in foreign countries, and of much learning. There were many synagogues at that time in Jerusalem, and as it is the custom still among the orthodox Jews, the synagogues were called by the names of the places from which its adherents came. This synagogue then was composed of Libertines, that is, Jews from Rome,* for they were known by that name, Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria. To this synagogue Stephen may have belonged, and if this was the case, his presence with them is easily explained. The fullness of Grace in his heart reached out after them. These Jews disputed with Stephen and he with them; but also those of Cilicia and Asia are mentioned. May not this young man, Saul of Tarsus, the Pharisee of the Pharisees, hailing from Cilicia, been among these disputers? *It is more than likely.* All their great learning was of no avail in the presence of such a powerful witness. The Holy Spirit bore witness and they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit in which he spoke. They would not accept the testimony of this gracious and powerful witness and therefore only another way was left to them. They are filled with satanic hatred against him, and as the chief priests did with

*It is wrong to call these "Libertines" free thinkers. Jews had been taken to Rome as slaves. Their descendants who had been liberated were called Libertines, that is freedmen. They were known as such in Jerusalem and hence the name "synagogue of the Libertines."

the Lord, did these here suborn men who accused Stephen of blasphemy. The charge is "blasphemy against Moses and against God." They succeeded in their satanic work by stirring up the people, the elders and the scribes. Stephen is arrested and brought before the council. There the charge is repeated. Three things are mentioned by them. He ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place; against the law and that he should have said: "This Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." And then they looked upon him and behold his face was like the face of an angel. All eyes were attracted to this wonderful sight. Steadfastly they looked upon a face of Glory; a face reflecting heaven's light, heaven's Glory; a face reflecting the Glory of Him into whose presence he soon would be called. And may not that young man named Saul also have been there and seen that face? And that dark countenance of that young Pharisee of Tarsus was soon to behold that same Glory-light and then tell the world of the Gospel of the Glory and that "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory unto glory."

CHAPTER VII.

The seventh chapter is the longest in the entire book and one of the most interesting and important. The whole council looked steadfastly upon that shining face, as if it had been the face of an angel. Thus we read in the closing verse of the previous chapter. How long they looked upon Stephen as he stood there we do not know. Perhaps after a few minutes of silence, an ominous silence, like the calm before a storm, the voice of the high priest is heard "Are these things so?"

Stephen then begins his great, God-given testimony. He is not permitted to finish it. They ran upon him with one accord and cast him out of the city and stoned him

The chapter is therefore divided into two parts.

I. **The address of Stephen** (Verses 2–53).

II. **The martyrdom of Stephen** (Verses 54–60).

1. The address of Stephen. We shall not quote the text of the entire testimony, which he delivered before the council, but request our readers to read his words carefully.

We notice at once a marked difference between the previous preaching by the Apostle Peter and the address of Stephen. The testimony of Peter was marked on the day of Pentecost and at the other occasions by great brevity. Stephen's address is the longest discourse reported in the New Testament. The name of Jesus is prominent in all the addresses of Peter. The fact that He was rejected by the people, crucified and that He rose from the dead and the call to repentance, were the leading features of Peter's preaching. Stephen does not mention the Name of Jesus

at all,* though he has the person of Christ and His rejection as the theme of his testimony. At the close of his address he speaks of the Just One of whom they had become betrayers and murderers.

Stephen had been accused of speaking against Moses and against God, also against the temple and the law. These accusations he is asked to answer. What he declared before the council shows plainly that the accusations are utterly false. His speech is therefore partly apologetic; but it is also teaching in that it shows certain truths from the historic events he cites. And before he finishes his testimony the accused becomes the accuser of the nation; the one to be judged becomes the judge. Indeed his whole testimony as he rapidly speaks of past history in his great and divinely arranged retrospect, is a most powerful testimony to the nation as well as against the nation.

Another striking fact is that he puts two persons into the foreground. These are Joseph and Moses. Why they occupy such a prominent place in Stephen's address we shall see later.

Another matter we have to mention briefly before we touch upon some of the special features of the address. A careful reading of the statements made by Stephen and comparison with the Old Testament records show that there are certain things added by Stephen of which we do not read in the previous records; there are also other variations. These are often called discrepancies and are used as evidences against the inspirations of the Scriptures. However, they are far from being that. The Holy Spirit through Stephen adds some details to the already existing records. Stephen who was a Hellenist, a Greek speaking Jew, spoke most likely in the Greek language and then used

*The name Jesus occurs in the auth. Vers. in Verse 45; it should be Joshua.

the text of the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), which explains some of these alleged discrepancies. We shall not attempt to explain any of the others as that would lead us too far. We turn now to the address of Stephen to examine its different parts.

1. Abraham's History. Verses 2–8. He begins with the great father of the nation, Abraham. Very significant is the beginning of the address. "The God of Glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran." The better translation is "the God of the Glory." The same expression is used in Psalm xxix:3, "The God of the Glory thundereth." In Ephesians i:17 "The Father of the Glory." In 1 Corinth. ii:8, where our Lord is called by the same title, "The Lord of the Glory" and in 1 Peter iv:14, "the Spirit of the Glory." With this beautiful phrase Stephen begins and when his testimony is finished he beheld this very Glory of the Lord and he saw Him of whom he had borne witness, the One who had appeared unto Abraham and unto Moses in the burning bush. This beginning is significant for the greater Glory of the Lord and the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is now soon to be made known through that chosen instrument to whom was committed the Gospel of the Glory of God, the Apostle Paul.

And the God of Glory had appeared unto Abraham when he was in the country of idolatry, yea himself an idolator (Joshua xxiv:2). God had graciously called him out of it and Abraham had gone forth in faith, not knowing where he went; God brought him to the land of Canaan. Concerning the promise Stephen said, "And He gave him none inheritance in it, not so much as to set his foot on; yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." Abraham believed the promise and was justified by faith.

All this manifested the Grace of God. It was unmerited favour. Abraham did nothing nor could do anything to earn all this. There was no temple then to boast of and no law to keep. The promise and the covenant were before the law. But they boasted in the law, which they did not keep and in the temple.

It was true of the council then as Paul wrote later "they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x:3–4). They had this righteousness and Grace offered unto them and they were rejecting it. The argument advanced here is similar to the one which Paul brings forth in Galatians iii. If the young Pharisee Saul of Tarsus heard Stephen, he heard for the first time, though still blinded, the great truth the Spirit of God unfolded through him after his conversion.

But Stephen also speaks of Israel's sojourn in a strange land as revealed unto Abraham. For four hundred years they were entreated evil (Verses 6–7). This tells of the suffering of Israel before they came into the possession of the land, a hint, no doubt, of the great truth so clearly revealed in Israel's history of the suffering of Christ and the Glory that should follow. Here the Spirit of God once more came to their consciences in this historical outline of their father Abraham. Alas! their hearts were closed.

2. Joseph and his brethren. Verses 9–16. Stephen in his inspired testimony passes over the entire history of Isaac and Jacob, and Joseph instead is prominently mentioned. The way the story of Joseph is given, the comprehensive style is really marvelous. The complete history of the suffering and glory, the humiliation and exaltation of Joseph, is pictured in a few sentences and that in a manner

which greatly illuminates this interesting portion of God's Word. In bringing Joseph at once before their hearts, what was done to him and to what place God exalted him, the Holy Spirit reveals one of the finest and most perfect types of Christ contained in the Word of God. The main issue of Stephen's testimony is before us with Joseph's history. "The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt." Their own brother, because they hated him without a cause, was sold by them into the hands of the Gentiles. The price was twenty pieces of silver. The meaning of this was so clear that the assembled council must have fully understood the application. The chief priests and elders had hated another one, who was, according to the flesh, their brother. And their hatred against him was on account of envy. Pilate even knew this. "For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy" (Mark xv:10). This Jesus of Nazareth, the name they hated so much, had been sold for thirty pieces of silver. His own had delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles, as Joseph had been sold into Egypt. Then we read the brief sentence, "And God was with him." The same phrase is used by Peter in reference to Jesus in preaching to the household of Cornelius (Acts x:38). The council knew perfectly that God was with the One, whom they had condemned. One of their own number, Nicodemus, had even come to the One, they despised and envied, with the declaration upon his lips "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John iii:2).

A description of Joseph's exaltation follows. "And delivered him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house." Then comes a brief account of the famine, which troubled the brethren of Joseph. They had to go and get bread from

the brother they had rejected. The second time Joseph was made known to his brethren.

The typical meaning is obvious. God had also delivered Him, whom they had rejected and crucified. He had raised Him from the dead and made Him, as Peter preached, both Lord and Christ. Then there is a great dispensational foreshadowing. The rejected One, like Joseph, is received by the Gentiles. Famine and tribulation awaits the nation who rejected Him who came to His own, they must suffer as Joseph's brethren suffered. "The **second time** Joseph was made known to his brethren," refers to the second coming of the Lord. Joseph was the salvation of his brethren.

3. Moses as Deliverer rejected. The rejected One a Ruler and Deliverer. Verses 17–38.

This is the largest section of Stephen's address.

In Moses they boasted continually. They were proud of him as their law-giver, the mighty man who had led their fathers forth from the house of bondage, through whom the God of the Glory had performed His great miracles. They called him, and orthodox Jews do so still, "Moses, our teacher." What was his experience? Was he at once received by their forefathers? Did they accept him when he came to deliver them? How was he treated? The Divine record is unrolled before their hearts and the history, so familiar to the council, speaks once more.

Moses foreshadows likewise Christ. His experience outlines the experience of Him, who is counted worthy of more glory than Moses (Hebrews iii:3–5).

Stephen says "the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham" (Verse 17). God remembered His Word. The people were in bondage in Egypt and needed a deliverer. God provided the deliverer through whom the promise, because the time of the promise drew nigh,

should be accomplished. All is pregnant with meaning. The time of the promise of the coming of the Redeemer had indeed drawn nigh. He had appeared, whom God had sent to deliver His people. Had He been received? The story of Moses' rejection was repeated on a larger scale in the story of Jesus of Nazareth.

First we find a description of Moses. He was born just in the time when the oppression was great; "in which time Moses was born." Even so, "when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His son made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. iv:4). Moses was "exceeding fair." The right translation is "fair to God;" he was exceedingly lovely. But how much more was He, who came from the Glory, the only begotten of the Father. Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Verse 22); Christ is the Wisdom. Moses was mighty in works and in deeds, but Christ was far more than that and manifested His divine power and grace in the midst of His people. The next thing said of Moses is that "he was cast out." The application of this to Christ we need not to follow in detail. When Moses was full grown, forty years, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. He appeared for them as a deliverer out of the bondage and it is written "He supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by His hand would deliver them; but they understood him not" (Verse 25). He was rejected by those he had come to deliver. "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" was the sneering word cast at him. Moses had to flee into a strange land and be among strangers for forty years. And something similar had but recently been repeated in the very midst of the people. The deliverer had appeared. He had visited His people and made Himself known to them; "God by His hand would deliver them." But His own had not received Him. They understood not; they cast Him

out and denied Him. Like Joseph, Moses went to the Gentiles, rejected by his people. The application to Christ is easily made and we do not follow it in its particulars.

But Moses returned and the once rejected deliverer whom they knew not was after all the one who delivered them and brought them forth. "This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness forty years" (Verses 35–36). The Holy Spirit pressed home these great foreshadowings. Must they not have been reminded of the words spoken before by Peter? "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour—" (Chapter v:30). "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner" (Chapter iv:11). These were familiar words to them carried to their consciences by the Holy Spirit and now through the historical record of Moses, the Moses of whom they boasted, the same truth is flashed before them once more. "This Moses"—the one who was rejected "The same did God send" meant "this Jesus, whom you crucified—the same whom God sent and made Prince and Saviour."

Significant too is the event of the burning bush, the angel of Jehovah had appeared there in His Glory to Moses and it was by the hand of that angel that Moses became the ruler and deliverer (Verse 35). Wonders and signs were then accomplished through him. Of this uncreated angel the council believed that He was Jehovah Himself, while their traditions well known and received at that time, spoke of Him as the Messiah. This same Jehovah

had been in their midst and manifested His presence by wonders and signs.

The Holy Spirit witnesses also in this to the truth, so often revealed, that in the future, at the second Coming of Christ (corresponding to the second time in the history of Joseph), the nation will know and accept Him, whom they rejected before.

The history of Moses is the foreshadowing of the history of Christ. In Moses they believed and boasted. The accusation was that Stephen spoke against Moses. His testimony proves that he believes in Moses. But did the council really believe in Moses? The accused becomes the accuser. They did not believe in Moses and in his words. "This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; him shall ye hear." If they believed in this prediction as given by Moses they would have looked for that prophet, whose coming was promised by Moses. That it was fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter had stated in his second address (Acts iii:22–23). But they were unbelieving.

4. The Story of their Apostasy and Shame. Verses 39–53.

Even after the departure from Egypt and after witnessing the signs and wonders wrought, they did not obey Moses, they thrust him from them and their hearts turned back again to Egypt. So they had not obeyed Christ and had also thrust Him from them. This is followed by a brief rehearsal of their shameful history. They rushed into idolatry. They worshipped the host of heaven and during the wilderness journey they brought sacrifices to Moloch and Remphan (Amos v:25–27). Then their coming captivity had been announced. On account of the rejection of the One, who is greater than Moses, whose coming Moses had announced, greater apostasy and dispersion must follow.

Then he speaks of the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, made according to the fashion as seen by Moses and how they came under Joshua in possession of the Gentiles, who were driven out of the land (Verses 44–45). David is briefly mentioned. He found favour before God and desired to build a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built Him a house. But the most High dwells not in places made with hands. Solomon himself had made this declaration (1 Kings viii:27) and the Prophet Isaiah had expressed the same truth (Is. lxvi:1–2). Furthermore, the Glory and the Lord of the Glory, who dwelt once in the temple had departed; **Ichabod** (the Glory is departed) was written there. But more than that the Lord who was present in the tabernacle and whose Glory had filled the house once had appeared in their midst and they had cast Him out and slain the Prince of Glory. Could then that temple be called any longer "a holy place" as they said in their accusation? The tale of the apostasy of the nation was thus told out from the records of the nation.

But now the summing up comes. Perhaps throughout the discourse evidences of displeasure from the sides of the council must have been in evidence. If it had been in their power they would have stopped him before. They were, however, constrained to listen. Another power compelled them to hear the arraignment of themselves and of the nation. The climax is reached. Most likely they began to grind their teeth already. Their dark sinister countenances showed the wrath and bitterness of Satan. They are cut in their consciences. Perhaps some arose and disorder was about to issue.

Stephen ceases his retrospect. The Holy Spirit now addresses them directly. The accused Stephen becomes the mouthpiece of the Judge who pronounces the sentence.

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did,

so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

Every word was true. The entire testimony was unimpeachable. Stiffnecked and uncircumcised, resisting the Holy Spirit, persecuting the prophets who prophesied of Christ and the murderers of the Just One! This was their condition. With this the testimony of Stephen is ended; more than that the testimony to the nation is now to be closed. No longer is the offer to be made to Jerusalem.

II. The Martyrdom of Stephen.

> When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. (Verses 54–60.)

And now the awful storm breaks. The arrows of the truth of God carried by the power of God's Spirit had cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth. In their madness they were dumb. They did not find words to give vent to their burning hatred which Satan had kindled in their stubborn, unbelieving hearts. All they could do in their frenzy was to gnash with their teeth. It was not a sudden outburst but the tense rather shows that it was prolonged. In the midst of this wicked crowd,

no longer the council but a murderous mob, stood Stephen. If his face shone like that of an angel in the beginning of his testimony, what glory must have rested upon him now? The heavenly glory into which he was so soon to enter must have been wonderfully reflected upon his face.

Three things are said of him. He was full of the Holy Spirit; he looked steadfastly into heaven seeing there the Glory of God and he saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

The Holy Spirit in His fulness was upon him. He had testified through him and now as they are gnashing their teeth, ready to seize him and to follow Satan, who is a murderer from the beginning, to the full extent of his power, Stephen stands in great calmness and peace. The Holy Spirit who possessed him so fully directed his gaze away from the earth upward into Heaven. He looked steadfastly into heaven. This is one effect of the filling of the Spirit, the heart occupation with heavenly things. But more than that he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. The unspeakable Glory shone out of the depths of heaven and in that Glory he saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God. He of whom he had borne such a good witness, whose blessed name he had glorified in his life and by his words and whom he soon was to glorify in his triumphant death was seen by him.

While we read in the epistles that the Lord sat down, on the right hand of God, the attitude which tells of His finished work, we read here that He was seen standing. This is not a contradiction. We do not think it was because He was still waiting for Israel's repentance, ready to come back. He was seen standing because He had arisen from His seat to welcome into His own presence the faithful martyr.

This is the first manifestation of the glorified Christ, which we have on record. There are three of them only.

He appeared here to Stephen. Then (oh! marvelous Grace!) He appeared unto Saul, who consented unto Stephen's death. Saul beheld Him in that Glory, brighter than the noon-day sun and heard His voice. The last time the glorified Christ manifested Himself was to John in the island of Patmos. These three appearings of the glorified Christ present to our view the three aspects of His Second Coming. First He comes to welcome His own into His presence. He will arise and come into the air to meet His beloved co-heirs there. This is represented by the first appearing to Stephen, standing to receive him. Then Israel will behold Him, they who pierced Him will see Him, like Saul of Tarsus beheld the Lord. Then He will appear as John saw Him, the One who judges the earth in righteousness.

And now after this great and glorious vision, Stephen bears testimony to it. "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." He speaks of the Lord as "Son of Man." This is the only time outside of the Gospel records, that we find this title of the Lord (aside from the old Testament references in Hebrews ii).

But were not these familiar words to the frenzied council? Had they not heard One saying similar words? But a few weeks ago they had gazed upon Him, whom they hated and envied. The vision of that meek and lowly One must surely have come up before their eyes that very moment. And He had said in the presence of this very council, "From henceforth shall the Son of Man be seated at the right hand of the power of God" (Luke xxii: 69). And here is the echo of that solemn word on account of which the Holy One was condemned. But it is more than an echo. It is the witness that the Son of Man is there at the right hand of God.

We do not read of an orderly trial which followed. All order was abandoned. Chaos and confusion reigned. They

cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord. Stopping the ears is a frequent occurrence among orthodox Hebrews. We have talked with some of them and after pressing an argument about the Messiahship of Jesus, they would put their hands to their ears, as if to shut out any further argument.

The Sanhedrim had been changed into a wild, furious, demon-possessed mob, bent on the murder of God's witness. One thing they do which was according to the law. They rushed him out of the city. Like the Lord Jesus Christ he was to suffer "without the gate." The law required this (Lev. xxiv: 14; Num. xv: 35). And there they stoned Stephen. In this act they were lawbreakers for their own witness had been to the Roman authorities, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" (John xviii: 31).

But they make a show of keeping the law. In Deut. xvii: 7, it is written: "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hands of all the people." They had witnesses who began the awful work by casting stones upon him first. And that young Pharisee of Cilicia took a prominent part in this terrible scene. He was a prominent figure in it. Saul of Tarsus stands in the foreground. If he was a member of the council, which is more than probable, then he heard the whole testimony of Stephen and consented to his death. In Acts xxii: 20 we read that he said "I was standing by." This may mean that he had charge over what occurred. One thing is certain, he was intimate with the witnesses. They took off their upper garments so as to be freed to strike hard, and deposited their garments at the feet of Saul.

And now the stoning began. The first thing Stephen did was to pray. He called upon the Lord. (The word God in the authorised version is inserted.) His prayer was addressed to the Lord Jesus, into whose hands he committed his spirit.

Then he bowed his knees and with a loud voice he man-

ifested the love of Christ by forgiving his murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." This prayer was answered in the conversion of that young man, whose name was Saul, for the responsibility and guilt was upon him, inasmuch as he had consented unto his death (Chapter viii: 1).

Then Stephen fell asleep. The mighty witness closed his eyes on earth. But what a moment it must have been when his spirit was received by Him whose Glory and Person he beheld, and into whose hands he had committed his spirit.

God's gracious offer and Christ had now been fully rejected by the nation. Stephen, who bore this last witness, is a striking evidence of the transforming power of Christ. How much like the Lord he was!

He was filled with the Spirit, full of faith and power, and like the Lord he did great wonders and miracles among the people. Like Christ, he was falsely accused of speaking against Moses, the law and the temple, and of being a blasphemer. They brought him before the same council and did what they did with the Lord, bringing false witnesses against him. He gave witness to the truth of the confession, the Lord had given before the council, that He was to sit at the right hand of God. He beheld Him there. The Lord Jesus committed His spirit in the Father's hands, and Stephen prayed that the Lord Jesus receive his spirit; and like the Lord he prayed for the forgiveness of his enemies. May the same power transform us all into the same image.

CHAPTER VIII.

The final testimony to the rulers of the Jewish people had been given. It was rejected, and the Spirit-filled messenger killed. The last offer had therefore been completely rejected and the Gospel is now soon to be sent far hence to the Gentiles; those that are afar off are to be brought nigh. The eighth chapter is a transition chapter. The Gospel is preached in Samaria. The instrument used is not Peter or John, but Philip.

We divide this chapter into five parts:

I. The first great persecution (Verses 1–3.)

II. The preaching of the scattered believers. Philip in Samaria (Verses 4–8).

III. The events in Samaria (Verses 9–24).

IV. The Gospel in many villages of Samaria (Verse 25).

V. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Verses 26–40).

I. The first great persecution.

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison. (Verses 1–3.)

The first sentence with which this chapter starts belongs to the preceding chapter. The young Pharisee, who soon takes the prominent place in this book, was in perfect agreement with the awful deed committed. He rejoiced. The death of Stephen was with his fullest approval. He took pleasure in it. He was an eye-witness to the entire suffering of Stephen from the moment the dispute took place to the time when the stones fell upon him outside of the city and

his blood was shed. Later he refers to the scene, which must have been impossible for him to erase from his memory. "When the blood of Stephen was shed, I was standing by and keeping the garments of them that slew him" (Acts xxxii: 20). Concerning Saul the Lord said to Ananias, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (ix: 16). What was done unto Stephen was done unto Saul. The Jews and Saul with them, as we believe, disputed and resisted Stephen in the synagogue. The Jews disputed with Paul, resisted him, and rejected his testimony. Stephen was accused of blasphemy; so was Paul (Acts xix: 37). Stephen was accused of speaking against Moses, the holy place and the customs; so was Paul (Acts xxi:28; xxiv:6; xxv:8; xxviii:17). They rushed upon Stephen with one accord and seized him. The same happened to Paul (Acts xix:29). Stephen was dragged out of the city. So was Paul (Acts xiv:19). Stephen was tried before the Sanhedrim; so did Paul appear before the Sanhedrim. Stephen was stoned and Paul was stoned at Lystra. Stephen suffered martyrdom; so did Paul in Rome. And yet, with all the sufferings that Paul had to undergo, he rejoiced. His eyes rested constantly upon that glorious one, whom Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, beheld in Glory. Later we hear him crying out from the prison in Rome, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made comformable unto His death" (Phil. iii: 10).

The first great persecution then broke out against the church in Jerusalem. The words of the Lord concerning His own, that they were to suffer and to be hated, were fully carried out. Saul was evidently the leader. Perhaps from the very scene of bloodshed he led forth a mob of people, like so many tigers, having seen blood. There is no detailed account of the persecution. They were driven out of Jerusalem. Houses were entered and men and women dragged

out of them and put into prison. The Epistle to the Hebrews, no doubt, refers to this first great persecution. "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of affliction. Partly while ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion on me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance" (Heb. x:32–34). They were disgraced, flogged, their goods were taken from them and they were driven out of the city. All this they stood joyfully. There is no record of anyone appealing to the Roman law. How many believers would in our day endure such persecution! But even this was only the beginning. Hundreds of years followed of the most cruel and satanic persecutions in which uncountable numbers were tortured, cast into dungeons, starved to death, burned alive, sawn asunder, cast before wild animals; every conceivable cruelty was practiced upon Christians. But the roaring lion had to withdraw, defeated.

Saul is the leading figure in this great persecution. He ravaged and laid waste the church. What a miracle of grace to hear him later refer to his conduct, "I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons, both men and women" (xxii:4). "I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee. And when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto His death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him" (Acts xxii:19, 20). "Which thing I did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and, being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities"

(Acts xxvi:10, 11). He called himself a blasphemer and a persecutor (1Tim.i:13). What light these confessions of the great apostle shed upon the brief record here in our chapter. In the Epistle to the Galatians and in 1 Corinthians he declares that he persecuted the church of God (1 Cor. xv:9; Gal. i:13). This should for once dispel the new teaching which has arisen, that the church did not come into existence till Paul had received the revelation concerning the church. That the church began on the day of Pentecost is frequently denied. But how could Paul persecute the church, if there was no church at all?

Then we see Stephen laid aside. His mangled body was carried by devout men to its resting place, while his spirit was in the presence of the Lord. These devout men were men like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Their lamentations were a Jewish characteristic. The Hope of Glory was not known to them. Later even the Thessalonian Christians sorrowed as others, who have no hope (1 Thes. iv:13). Then was made known that "blessed Hope," which should forever dispel the sorrow and lamentations of God's people. But that hope was unknown in the beginning of Acts.

II. The preaching of the scattered believers. Philip in Samaria.

> They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word. And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ. And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did. For *from* many of those which had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed. And there was much joy in that city. (Verses 4–8.)

They were scattered abroad. Only the Apostles remained in Jerusalem (verse 1). This has been explained as a failure

on the side of the twelve. It is incorrect; God guided them and kept them there. That they were not arrested and also put into prison may perhaps be explained by the fact that they were not Hellenists, but natives of the land. The persecution may have been the severest against the Grecian Jews.

And now for the first time we learn that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." "The scattered believers went about preaching the Word." God permitted all these hardships, that the precious seed of His own Word might now be scattered abroad by the suffering saints. The Lord had said that they were to be His witnesses not only in Jerusalem, but also in Judea and in Samaria. This He accomplished by the suffering of His people. What a sight it must have been when they went north from Jerusalem! A stream of men, women and children, in bodily pain from the hands of cruel men, stripped of their belongings, pours forth from the gates of the city. They were cast upon the Lord as never before and the Lord became more real to their hearts. And then they went about preaching. Every one was a preacher. The great head of the church, not some ecclesiastical council, some committee, which ordained them and gave them authority, but the Lord Himself sent them out as His witnesses. Alas! what a contrast with ecclesiasticism of today with its man-made rules, its crystalized forms, ordinations, recognitions, etc.

And such an exodus from the city, out of which the Lord had been led forth to suffer outside the gate, has been repeated over and over again in the history of the church with like gracious results in scattering the seed of the Word. We mention only the Waldenses and the Huguenots. Satanic powers produced the first great persecution. But the wrath of the enemy had to praise the Lord. Out of it all there was brought Glory to Himself.

And now Philip comes in view. He was not an Apostle,

but a Grecian Jew, one of the seven which had been chosen to look after the poor. The first great missionary move was therefore not accomplished by apostolic authority, or apostolic leadership, nor by the decree of an apostolic council, but by the Lord Himself, who chose His own instrument and led him forth into the field.

And He led Philip to Samaria where He Himself had gone, yea, to the very city of Samaria, which is Sychar. There He had once gone on the weary journey, and tired on account of the way, "He sat thus on the well" (John iv). The servant of the Lord Jesus Christ went the same road. What a comfort to remember when the servant is tired that He knows of this weariness. The Samaritans were not a race of strangers altogether, but they had Israelitish blood in them. They had claimed to possess the true law and the temple. A division was the result and they were hated. As we read in the Gospel of John, "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John iv: 9). The soil there, however, had been prepared. The Samaritans in large numbers had believed on Him, for the words of the woman with whom the Lord had that memorable conversation at Jacob's well. They invited the Lord to tarry, and many more believed on Him and these said unto the woman, "Now we believe not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know indeed that this is the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John iv:42). Among this people Philip appeared and preached Christ. With one accord they gave heed to these things. Had he preached something else it would not have been so. The great message still is to preach Christ. Miracles also took place. Unclean spirits were driven out, many taken with palsies and that were lame were healed, so that there was great joy in that city. These miracles in Samaria were of special significance of which we shall hear in the verses which follow.

Philip did miracles in connection with preaching the Gos-

pel. Unclean spirits are especially mentioned. They came out of many which were possessed by them. Like Judea, Samaria seems to have been much afflicted by demon possessions. The city where Philip preached and the miracles were done, rejoiced greatly. "There was great joy in that city" (verse 8). Miracles were in order then because the Word of God was not yet complete. Now after the Revelation of God is complete, miracles are no longer a necessity. Faith rests upon the Word of God and not upon miracles. The verses which follow show that there was a special significance in the miracles done by Philip in Samaria.

III. The Events in Samaria.

> But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdon of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also; and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. (Verses 9–24.)

A sinister person is now introduced in this historical account. Simon Magus, as he is called, was an instrument of Satan—most likely used in a special way to keep the Samaritans in darkness and counteract the work of the Lord, which had been accomplished there (John iii). He had bewitched the Samaritans, who were much given to all kinds of superstitions. The superstitiousness of this people resulted in the fall of Pontius Pilate. About the year 35 A.D., a deceiver had appeared in Samaria and claimed that the sacred vessels were hidden by Moses on Mount Gerizim and that he would discover them. A very large multitude

followed him, but Pilate was there also with soldiers and drove the people away. Large numbers of them were killed. The Samaritans made a complaint to Vitellius, the proconsul of Syria, who had Pilate dispatched to Rome to be tried. Simon was one of the numerous persons who preached all kinds of evil and forbidden things. With his wicked sorceries he had ensnared the people. Suetonius, a Roman historian, who lived in the first part of the second century of our era, gives the information that the whole eastern countries were at that time overrun with all kinds of wonder-workers, astrologers, healers and necromancers. One of the greatest was Apollonius of Tyanaeus, who died about 97 A.D. He was a great sorcerer and worker of miracles. His life and supposed miracles were often compared with those of our Lord. Satan had anticipated the coming of the Gospel and used this man to keep the Samaritans in bondage, to counterfeit the power of God, and to oppose the truth. Simon used sorcery, and had amazed the Samaritans with his acts of sorceries. Satan revealed his powers through him, and Simon himself claimed to be some great one, perhaps the incarnation of some higher being. The people of Samaria had believed him and his lying wonders, and even called him "that Power of God which is called Great." He was a false prophet and his signs and miracles he did, sprung from an evil source. All this is full of significance. Satan still counterfeits the Power of God. For the end of this present age there is predicted the manifestation of Satan in all power and signs and lying wonders (2 Thess. ii: 9). As the age nears its close and with it the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory, Satan with his host of demons becomes increasingly active, ensnaring the people and leading on into blindness those who reject the Gospel. As in the days of the Evangelist Philip, so now he uses men as his instruments. Simon Magus is reproduced in our days not only in persons who, deluded as they are, claim to be some

great one, but in systems, such as Spiritualism, Christian Science and Millennial Dawnism.

The hour of deliverance came for the Samaritans when Philip preached the Word, concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Signs and great miracles followed, and the Samaritans believed and were baptized. The miracles were done to show the power of God, to attest the preaching of the Gospel by Philip, and to expose the counterfeit powers of Simon. And he, like the sorcerers of Egypt, had to own that this was the power of God. He was amazed when he beheld the great miracles. But more than that, he also believed, was baptized and then continued with Philip. But his faith was not through the Word of God. God's word alone can produce faith in man, for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Simon was captivated by the miracles he had seen. He believed in the same way as the many of whom we read in John ii. "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, on the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles He did." But was this the true faith? Was this a saving faith? Are miracles necessary to believe? The last two verses of the second chapter of John answer these questions. "But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man." He knew their believing on Him was not in truth. And so Simon Magus believed in the miracles. He also submitted to water baptism from the hands of Philip, which completely disproves that unscriptural teaching that water baptism is a saving ordinance, and that the new birth takes place in that act. He continued with Philip. This also is significant. He kept close in the company of the evangleist, no doubt to watch him and see whether he could discover the secret of the power of Philip. In the truth, in the Word of God, that wicked man had absolutely no part. Philip did not discern him. The attitude of

Simon and his outward profession must, therefore, have been very cleverly devised. The discovery, however, came when Peter and John appeared in Samaria.

> Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity. (Verses 14–24.)

From Jerusalem, Peter and John were sent by the apostles to Samaria. The Holy Spirit had not been given to the Samaritans. After the two apostles had prayed for them and laid their hands on them, they received the Holy Spirit. This fact, that the Holy Spirit was given after the prayer of Peter and John, has led to erroneous teaching.

Ritualistic Christendom uses this passage in the defence of its traditional teachings of apostolic succession and different rites, which have no foundation in the Scriptures. A recent commentary on the Book of Acts makes the following remarks on these verses: "The Apostles supposed that the Holy Spirit would be given in answer to prayer and the laying on of their hands. Their expectation was justified; *and the church has accepted this as the normal method.* Luke gives us, in all, four accounts of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Chapters ii; viii; x and xix). On two occasions

Pentecost and Cornelius household) the gift itself was extraordinary. The two other occasions (Samaritans and disciples at Ephesus) were normal, and the gift was conveyed by prayer and the laying on of hands. These hands were apostolic; in the one case, those of Peter and John, in the other of Paul. Nowhere in the Acts is the laying on of hands by other than apostles mentioned in this connection; and it is evident from this incident that, although Philip was a prophet and one of the seven, although he preached the Word and baptized, yet he did not possess this power. We conclude then that, as Luke states it, *through the laying on of the hands of the apostles the Spirit is given.* We are justified then, in finding here the beginning of the church's rite of confirmation."

Thus ritualism claims through the laying on of hands by men who are ordained through others, who likewise received ordination, and so back to the apostolic times to confer the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Another erroneous teaching, built on the apostles communicating the Holy Spirit to these new believers, is one which becomes more frequent and is the source of much confusion among sincere Christians. It is taught from this historical account that a person may be a believer without possessing the Holy Spirit. The reception of the Holy Spirit, it is claimed, is a work entirely distinct from conversion. A Christian believer may be saved for a long time and be entirely destitute of the Holy Spirit; in order to receive Him, the believer must seek the experience and receive the Spirit; this is a very widespread teaching. The case of the Samaritans is often quoted to uphold this teaching.

All these wrong interpretations and wrong teachings would be avoided if the dispensational character of this part of the Acts of the Apostles were recognized. We have no teaching concerning the Holy Spirit and how He is to be received in this passage. The doctrine of the

Spirit and how the believer receives Him and His work in the believer is not taught in the Acts of the Apostles. This is a historical account, and if one holds to this and to the fact that Samaria (John iv: 19–24) had a controversy with Jerusalem, the coming of the Apostles from Jerusalem, and the withholding of the Holy Spirit from the Samaritans till Peter and John arrived, becomes plain at once.

The Samaritan believers had to be identified with those in Jerusalem, so much the more because there was a schism between Samaria and Jerusalem. Samaria had denied both the city of Jerusalem and the temple. This had to be ended and could no longer be tolerated. It was therefore divinely ordered that the gift of the Spirit in *their* case should be withheld till the two apostles came from Jerusalem. This meant an acknowledgment of Jerusalem; if the Holy Spirit had been imparted unto them at once it might have resulted in a continuance of the existing rivalry. And Peter is in the foreground and uses the keys here with the Samaritans as he did on the day of Pentecost with the Jews and later with the Gentiles. Nowhere in the church epistles, in which the great salvation truths and blessings in Christ Jesus are revealed, is there a word said about receiving the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, or that one who has trusted in Christ and is born again should seek the gift of the Holy Spirit afterward. When we reach the nineteenth chapter of this book we shall follow this at greater length.

There is no record here that the gift of the Spirit was attended by outward signs, such as speaking in tongues. Some manifestation must have accompanied the gift, for Simon "*saw*" that the Holy Spirit was given by the apostles' hands. Then the wickedness of his heart was revealed when he offered them money for the same power to impart the gift. He is now completely uncovered. No work of God had been produced in his soul or he would not have uttered such wicked words. His whole desire was to get

power and pay for it. He made merchandise of that which is the gift of God, and all for his own advantage and for vainglory. And this sin, which has been termed "Simony," is still alive in many different phases. One must think here in connection with Simon of the present day movement called "Christian Science." This system uses no doubt occult things and contains philosophical speculation, which were not unknown to Simon the Sorcerer. But to become a successful healer a certain sum of money must be paid. The secret of power to heal is sold. And what else could one say of the more subtle forms of this sin? And now the two Simons face each other, Simon Peter and Simon Magus. Peter at once detected the wicked heart of the man through whom the enemy of God had spoken. In holy indignation and condemnation Peter burst forth: "Thy money perish with thee!" The sorcerer with his wicked heart thought that the Gift of God could be purchased with money. In this the aim was the Gospel itself. Salvation and all that is connected with it, including the Spirit, is the Gift of God, without money and without price; it cannot be earned nor bought. He had no part nor lot in this matter. And this is true of all who in the depravity of their hearts think of obtaining the power of God by what they do. He sees himself uncovered and exposed "in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity" in spite of his outward profession, his baptism and association with Philip. And while Peter thus spoke these burning words against him, he also exhorted him to repentance and prayer. Simon Magus is a type of what apostate, self-centered, self-seeking Christendom is, as well as of that person who is the "son of perdition," the personal Antichrist. And what had Simon to answer? "Then answered Simon and said: Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me"(Verse 24).

He was alarmed. He trembled like the demons, who believe and tremble. There is no confession from his lips,

no self-judgment. He does not exhibit confidence in the Lord nor does he ask for forgiveness. He was not moved by repentance, but only by fear. We do not read anything again of him in the Word of God.

Much is reported of Simon the sorcerer by the most ancient sources, the writings of the so-called fathers. Justin Martyr, who was a native of Samaria, who lived about a hundred years later, tells us that Simon held the doctrines of Gnosticism (the same which have appeared in a modern garb in Christian Science) and that the Samaritans worshipped him as a divine being. Epiphanius declares that he claimed deity among the Samaritans and that he was a Messianic pretender. Other sources say that he became after this a greater enemy of the truth, and having lost his prestige in Samaria he went to Rome and there established a wicked movement, which became a gall and bitterness to the true believers there. That he should have met Peter again in Rome and found his end there is only a legend. It is certain that he did not repent.

But the Gospel stream was not arrested. The acts of the enemy came to naught. The roaring lion as exhibited in the Sanhedrim the first persecutions—the more cunning deception of the counterfeit Simon, the sorcerer, all came to naught.

IV. The Gospel in many villages of Samaria.

> And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. (Verse 25.)

The apostles had accomplished their mission. They are turning homeward. On that journey they carried out the divine commission to be His witnesses in Samaria. Many villages heard the Gospel from their lips and with joyful hearts they declared the good news. What stir it must have made! They followed the Lord who had gone

through Samaria, and what joy it must have been in these Samaritan villages when these two Jews heralded the good news! This is the last thing reported of John in the Book of Acts. Besides the Epistle to Galatians we hear his name only mentioned in the Apocalypse.

V. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch.

> And an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem, unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea. (Verses 26–40.)

The last part of our chapter contains the most interesting account of the acts of Philip. Called by the Head of the church to go forth as an Evangelist to Samaria, after his

work was finished in Jerusalem, he had been mightily used in preaching the Gospel. There is no record of the numbers who were saved. When the Gospel was preached in Jerusalem by Peter we hear of numbers (chapters ii:41; iv:4), because it was still an offer to the Jewish nation in connection with the promised Kingdom, but now as Jerusalem has rejected that offer and the Gospel goes forth to Samaria, and to the Gentiles, numbers are no longer mentioned. During this age the number of those who accept the Gospel and become members of the body of Christ, the church, is unknown. One of the sad features of present day Evangelism with its sensationalism are the reports of how many converts have been made, how many signed cards or promised to lead a better life. To what untruths and other evils such methods lead we need not to follow here.

Philip's ministry was greatly blest and so will every ministry still be used if it is done as under the Lord, in humility and dependence upon Himself. With such a successful field before him Philip might have settled down to strengthen the new converts and reach out after other places in Samaria. But the work of the Evangelist is to move about and preach the Gospel from place to place. Philip is commanded to change his place of testimony. The command was communicated to him by an angel of the Lord. It was a heavenly messenger who was used to direct his way.

The angel may not have appeared to Philip in visible form, for the text tells us that he spoke to him and does not mention anything else. His message informs Philip of the way he is to take. Later in the account when it is the question of imparting spiritual instruction and dealing with the eunuch not an angel, but the Spirit speaks to Philip. The direction of the angel calls Philip away from his pleasant field of labor into a lonely and desert road. How many objections he might have made to such a call. Why should he leave the populous city and villages of Samaria where the multitudes

heard him gladly and go on a journey which would lead him into an uninhabited region and to a deserted city?* But Philip realized his place as a servant and that the servant's work is to be obedient to his Master. His Lord had been in Samaria and Philip had reaped what the Lord had sown. He had been sent to reap that upon which he had not bestowed any labor (John iv:36–38). And now the Lord called and he obeyed. He arose and went. Obedience to the Lord is a beautiful thing and must always result in blessing. Happy is the servant who can say "I do always the will of Him that sent me." If this is the attitude and the hearts desire the Lord will direct and show us the way in which we are to go. Such a life of dependence on the Lord and obedience to the Lord is truly great and will bring an abundant harvest. The obedient Philip may also be looked upon as a type of the nation itself. Some day the remnant of Israel will go forth in obedience to the call of the Lord and publish good tidings. Then it will be fulfilled what is written in Isaiah.

> How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. (Isaiah lii:7–8.)

But while the Lord had His eyes upon His toiling servant

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*Gaza was deserted then. Gaza was a fortress in the extreme south of Palestine. It was destroyed by Alexander the Great in the fourth century before Christ. What was not destroyed by him was in the year 96 completely overthrown by the Maccabaean prince Alexander so that it was literally a desert.

and directed him in the way, He also saw and knew the inquiring, hungry soul which traveled along that road towards Gaza. He knew his heart and his longing for the truth and then He brought Philip to meet this soul and through Him He graciously brought light and blessing to the eunuch. And thus He works still. Oh! for more childlike confidence in His guidance! A blessed thing it is to watch His leadings and to see His hand in even the minutest things.

The person journeying, most likely in a caravan, on the road to Gaza, was a man from Ethiopia. He was a eunuch of great authority under Candace Queen of the Ethiopians; he was her treasurer. He had been in Jerusalem to worship, most likely to attend the feast of Pentecost and was sitting in his chariot reading the prophet Isaiah. Who Queen Candace was, and in what part of Ethiopia her kingdom existed is learned from the Roman writer Pliny, and the Greek geographer Strabo. Both declare that there were several queens by that name ruling over the Ethiopians. The head of her kingdom was Meroe.

The eunuch was one of those who looked to Jerusalem, for light and blessing and had gone there to worship. He returned unsatisfied, still a seeker. As eunuch he was by the law an outcast and could not enter the congregation of Israel; however blessings are promised to the eunuchs in the very book from which he was reading (Isaiah lvi:3–5). And then the Spirit directed Philip to join himself to the chariot. The Ethiopian read the book of Isaiah aloud and Philip's question addressed to him was, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" He was reading the Greek translation of that all important chapter, the fifty-third. He read of Him who was led as a sheep to the slaughter and opened not his mouth. By his question the eunuch showed his ignorance in the Scriptures. He did not know that the passage had any reference to the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah of Israel. "One would wonder that whilst he was

at Jerusalem he should have heard nothing concerning Jesus. Or perhaps what he heard of Him was the occasion of his studying at this time that passage in Isaiah's prophecy."*

It was then on that lonely road that Philip preached Jesus unto him. He began at the same Scripture, which indeed is a good starting point. And the message Philip preached, showing Jesus as the One in whom these prophecies were fulfilled, was at once accepted by the seeking eunuch. He who by the law is excluded from the congregation of Israel is now received into another congregation, even joined to the Lord and added to the company which are saved. Nothing could hinder baptism, for he had believed; he himself asks to be baptized.

We have omitted the 37th verse. It does not belong into the text at all, but is an interpolation. The profession of faith put by this verse in the mouth of the Ethiopian anticipates Paul. The first time that Christ is preached that He is the Son of God is in Acts ix:20. Peter preached Him as the rejected Jesus of Nazareth, raised from the dead and Philip simply preached Jesus. It was reserved for Paul to declare the fulness of the Gospel of the Son of God, that Gospel of which he writes to the Galatians "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i:12). The best Greek manuscripts have not the verse, which speaks of the eunuch's confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. We do well to omit verse 37, as it is also done in the revised version.

The baptism takes place. Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and when they were come up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip and the eunuch saw him no more. Philip's mission was accomplished and now a miraculous event takes place. This is an

*Lightfoot in Hebrew and Talmudical exercitations upon the Acts.

interesting occurrence. The Greek word for "catching away" is used a number of times in the New Testament and means each time an action by power. It is found eleven times in the New Testament. In Matthew xi:12; xiii:19; John vi:15; x:12; 28. Acts xiii:39; xxiii:10; 2 Cor. xii:2, 4; 1 Thess. iv:17; Jude 23; Revel. xii:5. It is interesting to see that in the account of Paul's rapture into the third heaven this word is used and also in the divine revelation concerning the coming of the Lord for His Saints (1 Thess. iv:17). The catching away of Philip after the work was accomplished is a little type of what will take place some day by the mighty power of God, when all the living believers will be removed from the scene of their present labors. "Caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air," this is the blessed and imminent future of all God's children.

And the eunuch? What became of him? Did he go to the queen and did he give up his treasurership and become a great Evangelist through whom all Ethiopia was converted? Tradition may tell us these things but the divine record is silent. The time was not then nor has it come since that time, that "Princes come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" (Psa. lxviii:31); the fulfillment of this is reserved for the Millennial reign of Christ over the earth. The Holy Spirit has just one little sentence about the eunuch. But it is a most precious statement He makes concerning the Ethiopian who had received the knowledge of the truth and had believed the Gospel. "He went on his way rejoicing." He had Christ and well could he go on his way with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And, dear reader, this sentence should express the experience of every true believer. If we have Christ and are His and He is ours, if we know we are saved, and safe and have before us nothing but glory, then we too should go on our way rejoicing. Yea, even when trials and perplexities surround our path, the joy in the Lord must be

our portion. Anything less dishonors the Lord and the Gospel.

Philip was found some 20 miles north of Gaza, at Azotus. From there he started out anew preaching the Gospel. In many cities his voice was heard, these coast cities were inhabited by many Gentiles and included larger places like Jamnia, Lydda, Joppa and Antipatris. The day of Christ will make known the labors and also the reward of this great Evangelist. Then he came to Caesarea. But did he stop with that? We know not. Twenty years later we shall find him there and Paul was then his guest.

CHAPTER IX.

The previous chapter may be looked upon in its main part as a parenthesis. The record now leads us back to the close of the seventh chapter and the person who was connected with the great tragedy enacted there is prominently brought before us. The witnesses of the wicked deed had laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. This is the first time this remarkable man is mentioned. We also learned that he was consenting unto Stephen's death; he made havoc of the church and committed men and women to prison. While the scattered believers had carried the Gospel throughout Judea, Philip had gone down to Samaria and with great results preached the Gospel, and during the same time Peter and John preached in the Samarian villages, Saul carried on his work of persecution. This we learn from the opening verse of the present chapter. "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest." The conversion of this great persecutor and his call by the risen and glorified Lord to be the Apostle to the Gentiles is the event which is next described. It is the greatest event recorded in Acts next to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Before we expound the most important account of Saul's conversion and point out its extremely interesting lessons, it may be in order to give a brief description of the young man, who takes the leading part in the remaining portion of the Book of Acts.

Saul was born in Tarsus, an old city, and the capital of Cilicia. In that city was situated a great university given mostly to the study of Philosophy. Josephus in agreement

with Jewish literature identified the city with Tarshish, to which Jonah attempted to flee. Saul has often been called a "Hellenist," that is, a Grecian Jew. But this is easily answered by his own words, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." He belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, and his father was likewise a member of the same class, for Saul called himself "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (Acts xxiii:6). His bringing up was on the strictest Jewish order. All the observances of the law and the traditions of the elders were conscientiously followed by him. This fact he calls to mind when he wrote his great defense of the Gospel to the Galatians. "For ye have heard," he states, "of my conversation in time past in the Jew's religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it. And profited in the Jew's religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. i:13, 14). He also witnesses of his life before the Grace and Power of God converted him, when he wrote to the Philippians, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness, which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. iii:5, 6).

This young Pharisee had a strong belief in the God of Israel, in His promises and the destiny of Israel. This belief manifested itself outwardly in a zeal for God.* While he was thus filled with pride of race, zeal for God, but without

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*The same zeal possessed him of which he speaks as possessing his brethren according to the flesh.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (Rom. x:1–3).

knowledge, striving to attain righteousness, to fulfill and obey the very letter of the law, he had an intense hatred of what he supposed to be disloyalty to the law. In Tarsus, his native city, he became fully acquainted with Greek customs, Greek life, literature, art and philosophy. The local industry of Tarsus was tent making. These tents were manufactured out of goat's hair. This trade the young Saul learned. Teaching boys a certain trade is an ancient Jewish custom. His family may have been very influential and wealthy. He had a married sister living in Jerusalem, who must have been very highly connected (Acts xxiii:16). Saul of Tarsus was furthermore a Roman citizen. This was a high honor and privilege. It could be bought for large sums of money. When Paul was about to be scourged he mentioned his Roman citizenship. The chief captain, a Greek by the name of Claudius Lysias (Acts xxiii:26), said: "With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born" (Acts xxii:28). The prisoner held a higher honor than the captain; no wonder Claudius Lysias was afraid. His family must have had the Roman citizenship conferred upon them as a mark of distinction or reward for some eminent service.

Saul received his religious education in Jerusalem. We listen again to his own words, "I am verily a man, a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city (Jerusalem) at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye are all this day" (Acts xxii:3). Gamaliel was the greatest rabbi of the Pharisees, the president of the Sanhedrim. He was the son of Simon and grandson of the celebrated Hillel. We have found his name before in the fifth chapter. He was highly esteemed for his learning. The Talmud says, "When he died the honor of the Torah (law) ceased, and purity and piety became extinct." At the feet of this great and learned man, Saul of

Tarsus sat. That Saul was highly respected in Jerusalem and close to the leaders of the people, is seen by the letters entrusted to him and the commission to Damascus. He may have been even a member of the council, for "he voted." "When they (Christians) were put to death, I gave my voice (lit., my vote) against them" (Acts xxvi:10). It may be interesting to say a word on his outward appearance. He has frequently been pictured as a tall, handsome-looking man. But in 2 Corinthians x:10 we read otherwise. The Corinthians were used to the athletic figures of the Greeks. Of Paul they said, "His letters are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible." A very old apocryphal book, dating back to the end of the first century, "*Acta Pauli et Theclae*," has an interesting description of his person, which may be genuine. "A man of moderate stature, with crisp hair, crooked legs, blue eyes, large knit brows, and long nose, at times looking like a man, at times like an angel." And now we turn to the chapter before us. It is divided into five parts.

I. The Vision of Glory on the road to Damascus (Verses 1–9).

II. The Call to Ananias (Verses 10–16).

III. Saul filled with the Spirit, Baptized and Preaching Jesus, that He is the Son of God (Verses 17–22).

IV. Saul Persecuted and back in Jerusalem (Verses 23–30).

V Further Acts of Peter (Verses 31–43).

I. The Vision of Glory on the road to Damascus.

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from

heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. (Verses 1–9.)

We behold then, this young Pharisee in the zenith of his hatred against the disciples of the Lord. He breathed out threatenings and slaughter. His aim was much like Haman the Agagite, who wanted all Jews exterminated; so Saul was bent on the extermination of the believers in the Lord. The fact that he came to the high priest for letters to go to Damascus would show that he considered his work of persecution and scattering in Jerusalem about completed. There were several large synagogues in Damascus. As this city was in constant communication with Jerusalem, the Jews in Damascus must have heard much of the new and startling events which so recently had come to pass in Jerusalem. The day of Pentecost, in all probability, brought many Damascene Jews to Jerusalem, and perhaps some of them heard the message from Peter's lips. The good news was carried quickly in a short time; believers appeared in Rome at an early date, among them two, Andronicus and Junia, who were in Christ before Paul's conversion (Rom. xvi:7). Damascus had most likely a good number of Jews who believed in Jesus as the Christ. They had, however, not separated from the synagogue. The leader of them must have been Ananias, and of him Paul says later "a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there" (chapter xxii:12). The news of Saul's commission to arrest

believers in the Lord Jesus Christ had also preceded him, for Ananias in his simplicity told the Lord, "he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Thy Name" (ix:14). No doubt they must have earnestly prayed for deliverance from this great persecutor. He received his letters and went on his journey with a heart filled with burning hatred.

And now God's marvelous Grace and Power in salvation is to be manifested. Israel as a nation had rejected the offer and Stephen's death marked the end of that gracious offer. But God can manifest even greater riches of His Grace and display His great Love. Saul not alone belonged to the nation, which had rejected Christ, but shared in that rejection, but he was, so to speak, the heading up of all the hatred and malignity against the Christ of God. He personified the blindness, unbelief and hatred of the whole nation. He was indeed an enemy, the greatest enemy, the chief of sinners. Surely only Grace could save such a one, and Grace it is, which is now to be manifested in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the Grace, which he was to know first by the vision of the glorified Christ, and which he, ever after, was to proclaim and make known to others. And therefore he could say, "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them, which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. i:16). And we may also look upon the wonderful event which took place on the road to Damascus as a direct answer to Stephen's dying prayer and the first fruits of the blood of the first martyr. Stephen saw heaven opened; he beheld Jesus standing at the right hand of God; he saw the glory. We have mentioned before that Saul, the young Pharisee, stood by and beheld that uplifted face as it reflected the heavenly glory. He heard the words of Stephen testifying of this great vision and perhaps, as Stephen knelt down under the shower of stones, which fell upon him, he

saw the dark face of the young Pharisee Saul, and then for him and all who shared in the vile deed, he prayed that Christ-like prayer, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And now the heavens are opened once more. He, the chief of sinners, the religious Jew, who hated the name of Jesus and all who believed on Him, is now to gaze into the opened heavens and see not alone Glory and the Person of Him whom he persecuted, but also to hear His voice. What infinite Grace! Stephen, the Saint of God, beheld an opened heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the next who sees heaven opened and beholds the Lord and hears His voice is the chief of sinners.

What happened on the road to Damascus was unique. Saul's conversion is unlike any other conversion. Nor has such an event taken place since then. That it will be repeated on a larger scale in a future day is assured by the Word of Prophecy. The heavens will be opened once more. Out of the opened heavens there will again shine forth the Glory of the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. In His Glory, He will appear the second time. And when He comes in the clouds of heaven there will be still His blinded prople on earth, a remnant of them, and like Saul they will behold the glorious vision. Then will be fulfilled what is written in Zechariah xii:10: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for His only Son." Saul must have seen the nailprints and the pierced side, as Thomas saw them, when the Lord appeared the second time. Of that second coming it is written, "Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him and they also which pierced Him" (Rev. i:7). This is future. Those who pierced Him, His own, will see Him in that day and that will mean a wonderful salvation for the whole nation, for all Israel living in that day. In John xix we read in a number of passages that things were fulfilled when our Lord was crucified, but when it comes to the Scrip-

ture, "they shall look on Him whom they pierced," the Holy Spirit avoids the word fulfilled and substitutes for it "another Scripture saith" (John xix:37).

The conversion of Saul is therefore a great type of the national conversion of the people Israel.

The vision itself which burst upon Saul on the road to Damascus is one of the greatest in the whole Bible. It has baffled unbelief. Infidels of all descriptions, French rationalists like Renan, reformed rationalistic Jews, and the worst of all, the advocates of the destructive Bible Criticism, have tried to explain the occurrence in some natural way.

Renan in his *Les Apôtres* (the Apostles) says that it was an uneasy conscience with unstrung nerves, fatigue of the journey, eyes inflamed by the hot sun, a sudden stroke of fever, which produced the hallucination. And this nonsense is repeated to this day. Others of the critics have stated that it was a thunderstorm which overtook him, and that a flash of lightning blinded him. In that lightning flash he imagined that he saw Christ. This is preached by some of these critics, who occupy pulpits. Again, others have tried to explain his vision by some physical disease. Jews and others have declared that he suffered from Epilepsy, which the Greeks called "the holy disease." This disease, they say, put him into a state of ecstasy, which may have greatly impressed his Gentile hearers. In such an attack he imagined to have seen a vision and heard a voice. All these and other opinions are puerile inventions emanating from the Father of lies. The fact is, the conversion of Saul is one of the great miracles and evidences of Christianity.

After we have learned the importance and significance of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, as well as the typical and prophetic aspect of the event, we shall now examine the event in its details.

The ninth chapter does not contain the full record of what happened on the road to Damascus. The Apostle

Paul himself relates twice his own experience in chapter xxii:5–16 and in chapter xxvi:12–18. He also mentions his conversion briefly in 1 Corinth. xv:8, Gal. i:15–16 and 1 Tim. i:12–13. The three accounts of Saul's conversion are not without meaning. The one before us in the ninth chapter is the briefest and is simply the historical account of the event as it had to be embodied in the Book of the Acts, as history. The account in the twenty-second chapter was given by Paul in the Hebrew tongue; it is the longest statement and was addressed to the Jews. The account in the twenty-sixth chapter was given in presence of the Roman governor Festus and the Jewish king Agrippa, therefore addressed to both Jews and Gentiles. But are there not discrepancies and disagreements in these three accounts? Such has been the claim from the side of men who reject the inspiration of the Bible. There are differences, but no disagreements. These differences in themselves are the evidences of inspiration. The differences, however, are simply in the manner in which the facts of the event are presented. We shall point out all this when we come to these accounts.

It was near Damascus, when suddenly there shone round about the great persecutor of the church of God a light out of heaven. Nothing is said in this record here of the time of the day when this happened. In the third account in this book, the Apostle mentions the part of the day when it took place. "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me" (Acts xxvi:13). It was in the time of the day when the sun shone brightest. Its glaring rays fell upon the road upon which Saul and his companions were journeying on. Saul was pushing onward in his madness, eager to reach the city in which further demonstrations of his hatred were to be given, when suddenly a far brighter light than the light of the mid-day sun shone round about him and his companions. The light fell

out of heaven and was the Glory of the Lord of Glory. On the field of Bethlehem the Glory of the Lord shone round about the shepherds, but here it is the shining forth of the Glory of Him who had died and had risen from the dead, the Glory of Him, who entered into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And Saul under that Glory-light, fell to the earth; it was too much for a human being to stand. He laid prostrate on the ground. Those who were with him likewise fell down, for Paul in his account says that they all fell to the earth (Chapter xxvi: 14).

This is one of the alleged discrepancies. While in his account Paul declares that the whole company fell down, the record here states that the men, who journeyed with him stood speechless (Verse 7). In our present chapter the companions of Paul are seen standing while Paul tells us later they fell down. This is claimed to be a disagreement. Even some careful expositors like Dean Alford have found a difficulty here. But why should there be any difficulty at all? Paul's narratives of what happened to him contain the complete account. He tells us that they were all fallen to the ground when this glory-light shone out of heaven. This fact is omitted in the historical account here. We see those who journeyed with Saul standing speechless, after the Lord had spoken to him. It does not say that they stood when the light shone upon them. That would have been impossible. If the band, which had gone after the Lord in the garden to take Him captive, fell backward when the Man of humiliation had uttered His majestic "I am" (John xviii:6), how much more must these have fallen to the ground, when the heavenly Glory burst upon them. The text here tells us that the companions of Paul were so amazed at what had happened that they had lost temporarily the power of speech They had fallen to the ground but now had arisen and stood speechless.

But Saul had heard a voice out of that bright light. The voice spoke in the Hebrew tongue. This we learn from Paul's address before Festus and Agrippa. The voice calls him by name. He is fully known to Him who speaks out of heaven. All along in all his work of evil, his persecutions and the hatred he exhibited against those who believed on Christ, that eye had seen him and followed him. He had kept silent. He did not interfere in the wicked work Saul had done; but now He kept silence no longer. But more than that, Saul beheld the Lord Himself. In that great light which shone about him, in that opened heaven, he saw Him, who had spoken, the Man in Glory. The Lord Jesus Christ appeared unto him. The Son of God in the Glory of the Father was revealed unto Saul. Though the record here is silent about the actual vision, it is clearly seen from other Scriptures that such was the case. Ananias later addressed Saul and said, " Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way " (ix:17). From another verse in our chapter (verse 27), we learn that Barnabas said " that he had seen the Lord in the way and that He had spoken to him." Then in Chapter xxvi:16, the Lord Himself spoke to Saul: " I have appeared unto thee." A more direct testimony is found from the Apostle in 1 Corin. xv., where, after mentioning the different witnesses of the resurrection, Paul says, " and last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God " (1 Corin. xv:8–9). He saw the Lord in all His resurrection Glory and this, besides the direct call, constituted him an Apostle, for he was now a fit witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "Am I not an Apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" (1 Cor. ix:1.) Did he know the Lord in person when he walked on the earth? Saul was in Jerusalem

at that time; he must have seen Him there. 2 Cor. v:16 seems to indicate this.

And now that voice, which had spoken with so much tenderness on earth, the voice he had refused to hear, spoke to him from glory, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME? And he said, Who art Thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."*

And what a meeting it was which thus took place on the road to Damascus! The Lord who had died for that nation (John xi:51), and he who was the culmination of all the hatred of the nation, who hated Him without a cause, were now face to face. His eyes gazed upon that figure in Glory, his ears heard the words which fell from His lips. The words which came out of heaven were not the words of a stern Judge. It was the voice of a gracious, loving Saviour and Lord, the same who had once called in the garden to fallen man, "Where art thou"? Saul, the persecutor of the church of God, had deserved wrath. Instead of judgment and wrath, Grace, infinite and unfathomable Grace, meets him. That Grace, which he was the chosen instrument to proclaim from henceforth in all its unlimited riches, he must taste first of all. That Grace which flows from the risen and glorified Saviour is first of all manifested in his own case. The possibilities of Grace, the riches of Grace, are indeed fully demonstrated in the great event on the Damascus road. Triumphantly he declared afterwards, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;

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*The words which follow in the authorized version "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?" must be omitted here. They do not belong into the historical account as given by Luke. They were inserted later from chapters xxii and xxvi, where they are in the right place. No Greek manuscript contains them. (See Alford Greek New Testament *in loco*.)

of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me *first* Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. i:15, 16). "Saul, Saul, *why* persecutest thou *Me*?" The voice had spoken out of heaven. How could he answer that question? It was unanswerable. From the trembling lips of the young Pharisee there comes the question, "Who art Thou, Lord?" The person he beholds, shining out of heaven surrounded by the glory-light, which of old dwelt in the midst of Israel, can be none other but Jehovah. And so the prostrate Saul addresses Him as Lord. And the Lord answers him in His loving Grace, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." The full and awful truth now flashes upon the trembling questioner. The Jesus, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil (Acts x:38), who was crucified, who was rejected by the nation, the Jesus, whom dying Stephen beheld, into whose hands he had committed his spirit, that Jesus, whom he hated and whose followers he had so cruelly persecuted, is Jehovah. The Man, who hung on a cross reckoned among the evil-doers, who died that shameful death, lives and is the Man in Glory at the right hand of God. Marvellous revelation as it burst upon the collapsed persecutor in the simple answer, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

What was he then with all his boasting law-keeping? Who was he, the Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee? Nothing less than an enemy of God and the chief of sinners. In that Glory from above, in that voice, which spoke and declared Himself as Jesus the Lord, the blindness, wickedness and enmity of Israel and the flesh as well, were fully discovered,

But if we were to enlarge, it would be necessary to cover all the blessed God-breathed teachings of the Gospel as contained in the Pauline Epistles. The Gospel he preached.

which he called "my Gospel," this Gospel of Grace and Glory, the Holy Spirit so blessedly teaches in the great doctrinal Epistles penned through the Apostle Paul, is contained in a nutshell in the event on the road to Damascus. To the Galatians Paul wrote later in his wonderful defense of that Gospel, "But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel, which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but *by the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Gal. i:11, 12). That Gospel, which he received was first revealed in that Glory-flash out of heaven; it is "the Gospel of the Glory of the blessed God." Man has no part nor share in it, but it is all of God, all of Grace.

But in the first chapter of Colossians Paul tells us that he is not only the minister of the Gospel but that another ministry was given to him, the ministry of the church, which is His body. The two, the Gospel of Grace and the truth concerning the church, the mystery hidden in former ages go together and are inseparably connected. God tells out in the two the completeness and riches of His grace in Christ Jesus. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, well termed "the rich Epistle," the Holy Spirit blends into a marvellous gem the two—Gospel and Church truth. And here the man in the dust of the highway, the chosen vessel, learns for the first time the great revelation he was to make known. Listen to him as he writes from the Roman prison:

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward, how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery . . . which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men" (Ephes. iii:1–5). That mystery is the church as the body of Christ. Every believing sinner is a member of the body of Christ. Christ in Glory, the Lord, who spoke to Saul in the way, is the Head of that body, the church.

Christ is in each member of His body, His life is there; and every believer is in Christ. "Ye in Me and I in you." And this great hidden mystery too flashes forth in this wonderful event, for the first time. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me*." "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." The poor, hated, despised Nazarenes, whom the mad, Jewish zealot Saul of Tarsus had driven out of Jerusalem, put into prison and delivered unto death, were one with the Lord in Glory. They were identified with Him and He with them. Their persecution meant His persecution, in their affliction He was afflicted. They were members of His body and that body was in existence.

The Lord commanded Saul to arise and go into the city where his question "What wilt Thou have me to do?" would be answered. The men then had also arisen and had lost the power of speech "hearing a voice, but seeing no man." We remember years ago how a poor, blinded Jew attended our Gospel meetings and among his claims that the New Testament contradicted itself, he would cite the statement here about the companions of Saul and Paul's statement that "they heard not the voice of Him that spoke with me" (Acts xxii:9). He called this a disagreement. The far more blinded Higher Critics make the same assertion. But there is no disagreement. Luke in his brief account tells us that the men heard a voice. But Paul tells us that they heard not "*the* voice of Him that spake with me." They did not hear the conversation, they heard the sound of a voice but the voice itself was unintelligible to them. John xii:28–29 explains it perfectly. The Son of God heard the Father's voice. The people who stood by heard the sound waves and some declared that it was thunder, others that an angel had spoken. Only the Son heard what theFather had said. So here. The men heard the sound of the voice, but what was said they did not hear; Saul alone understood the words of the heavenly speaker.

Then Saul arose. He is obedient at once. It is the first act of obedience he yields to Him whose bondservant he had become through His wonderful grace. But when his eyes were opened, he saw no man. The vision of the Lord and His Glory had blinded his eyes and his companions had to take him by the hand and lead him. What a change had taken place! The self-sufficient, boasting Pharisee, who had pressed on towards Damascus, had become as helpless as a child. He who led others was now obliged to be led. We wonder what became of the letters he carried from the high priest. Perhaps he flung them at once from his person.

The blindness which had come upon him has also its spiritual significance. It indicates the result of the vision of Glory in his own life. He was blind to the things down here. It is said of an astronomer who had looked too long into the light of the sun that he became blind. However, it was not darkness, which enshrouded him; but the brilliant orb of the sun in the heavens ever dazzled before his eyes. Wherever he looked he saw the sun. If he awoke in the darkest night the fiery ball of the sun was the object before his eyes. And Paul after his glory experience had but one object, Christ in Glory and the Glory of Christ. He truly like the disciples on the mount of transfiguration "saw no man save Jesus only" (Matt. xvii:8). The Gospel of Grace and Glory of the Son of God must blind our eyes to the things which are seen.

Three days Saul was without sight, nor did he eat and drink. He was passing through a grave like Jonah. What must have been his feeling and his experience during these three days? Shut up in darkness; what soul exercise must have been his portion! But He was secure in the hands of Him, of whom He was soon to testify, "He loved Me and gave Himself for Me."

II. The call to Ananias.

> And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I *am here*, Lord. And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. (Verses 10-16.)

And now the Lord, who had in such grace met Saul on the road to Damsacus, goes before him to the city. An humble disciple lived there; he was a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews, who lived in that city (Acts xxii:12). This devout follower of the Lord Jesus Christ had a vision which concerned Saul. One has well said, "The Lord Jesus as master of the house must, so to speak, complete arrangements for adding Saul to His household." What a great change had been wrought! Perhaps some day, in the presence of the Lord, when all hidden things will be made manifest, we may find that Saul's hatred was aimed especially against Ananias, who must have been the leader of the assembly in Damascus. Saul had set out to bind Ananias and all that call on the name of the Lord, and put them into prison. But Ananias hears now that he is to go to Saul instead and seek him, who had come to seek and persecute them. It was the Lord who spoke to Ananias in the vision. The childlike and calm answer this disciple gave to the Lord is an evidence of the simplicity and reality of his prayer life. The Lord gave him the directions where to find him. He was to inquire in the house of Judas in the

street, which is called the Straight. But the Lord furthermore told Ananias that Saul likewise had a vision. "Behold he prayeth" was the cheering message the Lord gave of him. It was the manifestation of the new life in Saul. In answer to the prayer of Saul, prayer, no doubt for light and deliverance, the Lord had given him the vision. He saw Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, that he might receive sight. "A pair of visions, which mutually correspond, as the visions of Ananias and Saul in this instance, removes all suspicion of treacherous phantasy." *

That Ananias was chosen for this mission is very significant. The Samaritans, as we learned in Chapter viii, had to wait till Peter and John came from Jerusalem, before the Holy Spirit came upon them. One would expect that the Apostles were equally needed in the case of Saul of Tarsus. Peter, John nor any of the other Apostles, however, are mentioned in connection with Saul's conversion, baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. In their place an humble, unknown disciple is called by the Lord to act. And yet Saul was called an Apostle and chosen to be the greatest of the Apostles. Ritualistic Christendom, with its claims of apostolic succession and authority, finds this hard to explain. Paul's apostleship was not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead (Gal. i:1). Jerusalem and the Apostles there had nothing whatever to do with his case. One who was not an Apostle at all, whose name is not mentioned again in the Bible, was the chosen instrument to lay his hands on Saul of Tarsus. Here then we have the first indication of what the apostleship of Paul was to be. It was three years after all this had transpired that he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter; and then it was not for any confirmation of his apostleship.

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*Bengel Gnomen of N. T.

Ananias answered the Lord. The evil reputation of Saul had preceded him to Damascus. Perhaps some of the suffering believers, who had been forced to leave Jerusalem, found a refuge in Damascus. And Ananias in a simple and natural way tells the Lord all about it. The task laid upon him seems too great and he acquaints the Lord with what he had heard about this man. This, has been declared, was a foolish thing. Of course, the Lord knew all about Saul; he knew far better the evil work he had accomplished than Ananias could ever know. Furthermore the Lord had told Ananias that Saul was praying; why then should he protest against the call and speak thus to one who is omniscient? While unbelief had its share in it and the weakness of the flesh is seen, it is likewise something which brings cheer to our hearts. The Lord in His graciousness does not rebuke Ananias for his unbelieving reply. He bears with the weakness of His servant and condescends to make known unto him the future destiny of the praying Saul. And we, too, fail so much in our prayers, doubting and fearing, when we are addressing Him, who is the omnipotent and omniscient Lord, so reluctant to follow unquestioning His gracious directions. Have we not found Him as loving and condescending as Ananias did?

And the Lord takes His servant into His own confidence; He tells him about Saul and what is in store for him. He is a chosen vessel and the Name, which is above every other name, is to be made known by him to Gentiles, Kings and the children of Israel. It is significant that the children of Israel are mentioned last, while the Gentiles are in the foreground. While Paul the Apostle preached to the Jews and went into their synagogues, his mission was to the Gentiles as the Apostle of the Gentiles. His sufferings for His Name's sake are likewise announced by the Lord. And here we must not forget that the same Lord, who knew all about Saul and his life as it was to be, is our Lord, too,

and knows us, plans for us, as He knew him and did with him, who delighted to call himself, "the chief of sinners." What comfort we should take from this fact!

III. Saul filled with the Spirit, baptized and preaching Jesus, that He is the Son of God.

> And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. (Verses 17–22.)

The Lord had said to Ananias "go thy way." Ananias went his way. He followed the Lord obediently. Directed by Him, he soon found the stricken Saul in the place, which the vision had revealed to him. The two, Saul of Tarsus and Ananias are now face to face. Saul does not see his visitor, for he is still blind, but he was patiently waiting for him to come, for the Lord had told him all about his coming and even revealed his name. And Ananias saw before himself the former persecutor of the Church of God (Gal. i:13) in a helpless condition. They do not need to be introduced to each other. The Lord had done this. Ananias addresses Saul and the way he does it is extremely precious. "*Brother* Saul," he said as he put his hands on him, "the Lord Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." He addressed

him as brother. The work had been accomplished and the young Pharisee, who had seen the Lord was indeed now "a brother beloved." The Grace of God is strikingly illustrated in this. There was no confession to Ananias, no rebuke nor accusation, nothing from the side of Saul of Tarsus; Grace had saved him and made of him a brother in the Lord. And now his blindness is removed under the laying on of hands; he received his sight. When we reach Chapter xxii, Paul's account of this scene, we shall find additional information of what transpired then. Here the record is brief. The laying on of the hands of this disciple* of the Lord most likely was the moment when not only Saul's eyes were opened, but when he was also filled with the Holy Spirit. Ananias had delivered the message to him that he should be filled with the Holy Spirit and though it is not directly stated here that this filling took place at once in connection with the opening of his eyes, it is perfectly right to assume that such was the case. We discover a variety of modes of the filling with the Spirit. On Pentecost no hands were laid on anyone, but the statement there made was, Repent, be baptized and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Samaritans had been baptized, but for a special reason (stated in our exposition) they had to wait till Peter and John came from Jerusalem and laid their hands upon them. Cornelius and his household were not baptized, nor had hands been laid upon them, when the Holy Spirit fell upon them. The disciples at Ephesus (Acts xix) were baptized and only after Paul laid his hands upon them came the Holy Spirit upon them. Paul must have received the Spirit first, then

*The learned Dr. Lightfoot in his *Horae Hebraicae* puts the following questions without answering them. "Could Ananias therefore confer the Holy Spirit? This seemed the peculiar prerogative of the Apostles; could therefore a private disciple do this to an Apostle? By the imposition of his hands could he impart the gift of tongues and prophecy?"

he arose and was baptized. Why these different modes? If there had been uniformity in every case it would have resulted in the belief that in order to receive the Holy Spirit, the same uniform method must be followed. This was to be avoided. It must be remembered that all these cases in Acts were unique, falling into the transition stage. The Epistles, however, teach that the Holy Spirit is received by all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; "in whom also believing ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i:13) is the order now.

Saul after this was certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. Who can describe the happy times in the Lord they must have had! What hymns of praise they must have sung to the Lord for the riches of His Grace, so wonderfully manifested in the salvation of Saul! "And straightway he preached Jesus in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." The word "*straightway*" teaches us something. It is the word which occurs some thirty-five times in the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel record, which shows Christ as the perfect servant. The word "straightway" manifests the Lord's prompt and untiring service, which He rendered to His Father. And Saul begins His witness for the Lord with a "straightway." Of all the Apostles he was the most prompt in his service, laboring more than all the others. The glorious vision on the Damascus road, the sight of the Man in Glory and his oneness with Him, as made known to him by revelation, produced this marvellous service in the life of the converted persecutor of the Church. We, too, if we have the Lord ever before our hearts may have our "straightway" service.

And what a sensation was produced as he went from synagogue to synagogue and delivered his message! Perhaps as he entered the synagogues his brethren welcomed him most heartily. Had he not done, according to their view, such a good work in Jerusalem? They hated that

Name, too, and were glad that Saul had come to bind the believers in Christ and bring them to Jerusalem to be dealt with by the chief priests of the nation. But how great must have been their consternation when the celebrated Pharisee and persecutor opened his lips and preached the very name they despised and hated. As he continued in this work in the synagogues his strength increased. The testimony he gave established him and was a blessing to his own soul. The Jews dwelling in Damascus, and their numbers were very large, were confounded. His preaching was exclusively concerning the Lord Jesus, who had been crucified; and he proved that this is the very Christ. The question of the Messiah promised to Israel was then agitating the hearts and minds of all Jews, as it does still among those Jews, who still believe in the Law and the Prophets. And what a preacher Saul must have been! He had a remarkable knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Holy Spirit filling him illuminated the many Messianic prophecies and in the power of the Spirit these were applied as being fulfilled in Him, whose name they had refused to accept. He began his great witness bearing in the Synagogues in Damascus. Later we read of the method he used, so effectually. "He reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ"* (Acts xvii:2–3). And to this arguing from Scripture came the powerful argument of his own experience. He had seen the Lord. The one who hung on the cross, whose tomb was found empty on the third day, who had been seen by His disciples after His passion, whom they declared to be

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*This is still the right way in arguing with the Jews. First, showing from the Scriptures the predictions concerning Christ. Secondly, showing their fulfilment in the person of our Lord.

risen from the dead, who had left the earth and ascended into heaven, whose resurrection had been fully proven by the Coming of the Holy Spirit and by many signs and miracles, Saul had seen and heard His voice. Therefore he preached Jesus that He is the *Son of God*. Up to this time this name of the risen Lord had not been preached. Our previous exposition showed that the words of Peter in chapter iii in which he spoke of the Lord Jesus as Son, were mistranslated and that viii:37, where the Son of God is mentioned must be omitted. It would have been very natural for Peter to refer to his former confession of Christ at Caesarea Philippi, where he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" but it was not for Peter to preach Jesus thus. Saul had seen the rejected One in Glory and this demonstrates Him the Son of God by resurrection from the dead, the great and blessed foundation truth of the Gospel.

IV. Saul persecuted and back in Jerusalem.

> And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. *Which* when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. (Verses 23-30.)

The Holy Spirit has not given us a record of the "many

days" mentioned in the 23d verse. During these many days he made a journey to Arabia. The first chapter in Galatians tells us of this fact. "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before me, but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus" (Gal. i:17). This is the only time his journey into Arabia is mentioned in the Bible. How long he spent there and what he did there is unrevealed. It is incorrect to say he spent three years in Arabia; in Galatians the statement is made that three years after his return to Damascus he went to Jerusalem. This does not mean that he was for three years in Arabia. Most likely as other great men of God went to the desert, Saul likewise sought Arabia for quietness, meditation and prayer. His reappearing in Damascus was the signal for an outbreak against him. He had confounded the Jews before he went into Arabia, and now with still greater power he was ready to continue his God-given message. The Jews then took counsel to kill him. It is the first act of persecution and suffering recorded in this wonderful life of suffering for Christ's sake. He is starting with what the Lord had said, "for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my Name's sake" (verse 16). But the plot was discovered by Saul. He knew himself in the hands of the Lord. That glorious Jehovah, whom He had seen, was His shield and He guarded His servant, as He still keeps His servants by His power. The plot was the work of Satan, who had become aroused on account of the great victory the Lord had achieved in translating the persecutor from the power of darkness into His own kingdom (Col. i). He could not wrest him from Christ, so he would silence his testimony here; but this Satan could not do.

The Jews had the gates watched; but by night he was let down by the wall in a basket. Paul refers to this later. "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to appre-

hend me. And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands" (2 Cor. xi:32–33). According to his statement in the chapter which relates his sufferings, this experience of having to leave Damascus as a fugitive was a very humiliating one. What a contrast with the anticipated entrance into Damascus, when he had left Jerusalem to persecute the church and his flight from Damascus to go to Jerusalem! This first visit to Jerusalem took place three years after his conversion. Why did he not return at once? Flesh and blood indeed must have suggested this to him. He was a courageous man. Nothing would have pleased him better than to return at once to the city he loved so well and preach the Name he once despised. But he did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did he go up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before him (Gal. i:16–17). It had to be so to prove that he had his apostleship apart from Jerusalem. This is the reason why this historical account is embodied in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians. In his defence of the Gospel contained in that epistle he shows first that he is an Apostle and how he became an Apostle. The twelve in Jerusalem had nothing to do with it. But when he arrived there he was treated with suspicion. Evidently the testimony he had given so faithfully in Damascus was not fully known in the church in Jerusalem. Could it be possible that this young Pharisee, who but three years ago had scattered the believers in the city, put them into prison and had them maltreated in every way and killed, was now truly a believer? This distrust surely was a sign of weakness in the disciples. Instead of believing the Grace of God, which had wrought so mightily in Saul, and rejoicing that he which persecuted them in times past, now preached the faith he once destroyed, they were afraid of him. This must have humbled him much. But He who had become the recipient of such Grace and delighted to call himself the chief of sinners, was

gracious, and we hear no complaint from his side on account of the distrust of the disciples. We meet again Barnabas; it is the same of whom we read in the closing verses of chapter iv. Barnabas, whose name means "son of consolation," was all this to Saul. He took him and introduced him to the Apostles, and told out the story of Grace more fully.

But we must again examine the historical record contained in the Apostle's own words in Galatians i. There we learn the details of this visit. He did not see all the Apostles, but only Peter and James, the Lord's brother. The other Apostles he did not see. This detailed statement is made to show that no council of the Apostles was called before which (according to ecclesiastical rules in our day) Saul had to appear to receive the sanction of the Apostles upon his own Apostleship, a kind of ordination. He did not need this; the Lord had called and ordained him. He was an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ.

He abode with Peter, was Peter's guest. He had come especially to get better acquainted with Peter. Perhaps he wanted Peter to tell him about the Lord, the blessed words he had heard from Him, the miracles He had done. The Gospel records were then not in existence. What a happy time they must have had together!

He abode with Peter fifteen days. His time in Jerusalem was well used. He spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. He also disputed with the Hellenist Jews. He did the same work which Stephen was occupied with when he was ushered before the council. For all we know it was the same synagogue which he sought out, the man who hailed from Tarsus in Cilicia. And if, as we showed in our exposition of the sixth chapter, Saul was one of those who disputed with Stephen, what a sensation it must have made in the synagogue, when this same Saul arose to perpetuate the mighty work Stephen had left to enter into the Lord's own presence! But Stephen's fate threatened Saul. "They

went about to slay him." The brethren knew of it and brought him to Caesarea and sent him forth to Tarsus, his own native city. The reason why Saul readily consented to this is learned from chapter xxii:17–21.

> And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

He received then in that trance-message his commission. Not Jerusalem and Judea was to be the scene of his activity, but the territory outside of the land; not the Jews' Apostle he was to be, but the Apostle to the Gentiles. "Depart, for I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles." When later Paul in self-will stepped upon the territory the Lord had told him to leave, he got into great difficulty and became a prisoner. As a result of Saul's conversion, the 31st verse says, "the churches had rest." The word "churches," however, must be changed into "church." The translation of church in the plural is founded upon later manuscripts. There were many local churches or assemblies in Judea, but it was but *one* church, as there is but one church to-day. *The* church then had rest. The believers walked in the fear of the Lord and comfort of the Holy Spirit. Increase marked this happy condition.

V. Further Acts of Peter.

> And it came to pass, as Peter passed "throughout all *quarters*, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed

eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner. (Verses 32–43.)

The ninth chapter closes with further acts of the Apostle Peter. It seems Peter made a kind of visitation, going from place to place. Two miracles happened in this connection. The healing of Aeneas and the raising up of Tabitha, who had died. The significant fact in connection with one of these miracles is that it was an *answer to prayer.* The one was healing and restoration, the other resurrection from the dead. Both miracles are of deep symbolical meaning. The Gospel was about to go forth to the Gentiles. Peter was to use again the keys of the kingdom of heaven in preaching to the household of Cornelius. Before this takes place the two miracles happened. They are significant in the place we find them, upon the threshold of the great event, the Gentiles to hear the Gospel. But why are they significant?

A commentator on these miracles says: "The record of these two miracles at this point makes us fancy that Luke saw in them a double sign of the great event to which they were the preface, viz., the gift of the Gentiles of repentance unto life (x:18). For they are complimentary: 1. The healing of Aeneas denotes the restoration of activity; and in the parallel sign of the Lord, the healing of the palsied man at Capernaum, this is associated with the forgiveness of sins. 2. The raising of Dorcas denotes the gift of life; and it shows the need of it for the pious such as Dorcas, as for the innocent like Jairus' daughter, whom the Lord raised. In Aeneas then we may see symbolized the healing of those Gentiles who are sick with sin; in Dorcas the giving of life to those Gentiles who, though full of good works, "are yet aliens from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them" (Eph. iv:18).

However, the far better application of these two miracles is to Israel. Aeneas, which means "praise," in his palsied condition like the impotent man in the five porches in John v. and the lame man in Acts iii. at the beautiful gate, is a type of Israel, Aeneas' helpless condition is the condition of that people. And as the lame man at the beautiful gate arose in the name of Jesus Christ, so Aeneas is healed and so Israel will be healed some day. His own people, who are far from being a Praise in the earth, will some day be healed of their paralysis and become the miracle of the Lord's grace and mercy. And as with the case of Lydda and Saron, the inhabitants of these places who saw him, turned unto the Lord, so the Gentiles will receive their full blessing and turn unto the Lord, when Israel is healed.

Without following the interesting account of Dorcas in its details, we desire to say she too represents Israel, and Dorcas' resurrection is a prophetic type of Israel's coming resurrection.

The good works of Tabitha, or as she was also called,

Dorcas, her alms deeds and the blessing she was to others, remind us of Israel's calling to bless all nations. But she died and could no longer do the alms deeds. So Israel is dead spiritually and nationally. Peter came from Lydda to Joppa sent for by the disciples. He kneeled down and prayed, and when he turned to the body he addressed the corpse, "Tabitha, arise." She then opened her eyes and sat up. Peter gave her his hand and lifted her up and presented her alive in the presence of the saints and widows. Many believed on account of this miracle. Even so Israel will some day be raised from the dead and become the source of great blessing. As Peter prayed: so may we long and pray for the restoration of Israel. Some day Israel will rise and receive the life of which that nation is now destitute. "Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem" (Psa. cxxii:6). "And give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isaiah lxii:7). How little of this prayer for Israel and Jerusalem is known among God's people! and all on account of the ignorance prevailing among Christians concerning the great destiny of the people who are still beloved for the Father's sake.

Peter tarried in Joppa in the house of Simon the tanner. Was he breaking with his Jewish law and customs? Tanning made necessary the handling of skins taken from unclean animals. It was, therefore, as a trade considered unclean by the Jews.

But for the great work Peter had to do in opening the door of the Kingdom to the Gentiles he had to be prepared in a special way.

CHAPTER X.

In Ephesians ii:11–18, we read the blessed words concerning the Grace of God to the Gentiles.

"Wherefore remember that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us,* Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Up to this time in the Book of Acts we have seen nothing of this gracious purpose, the blessed result of the finished work of Christ on the cross. Jerusalem heard the Gospel first. Once more the good news of the Kingdom was preached with a full offer of forgiveness to the Jews. God was willing to blot out their transgressions and to make good all He had promised to the nation. Many signs and miracles had been done in Jerusalem in demonstration of the resurrection from the dead of the Prince of Life, whom they had crucified. We have seen how the seventh chapter in this book marks the close of that special offer to Jerusalem. Immediately after the death of Stephen, the Gospel was carried into Judea and Samaria. In Samaria a people heard and accepted the glad tidings. They were a mixed race and practiced circumcision and obeyed parts of the law. In the ninth chapter the

conversion of Paul is recorded and the Lord makes known that the persecutor of the church is to be the chosen vessel to bear His name before the Gentiles. Paul, however, was not chosen to open first the door to the Gentiles as such, but Peter, the Apostle of the circumcision. A new work is given him to do, which was indeed a strange work for a Jew. He was to go to the Gentiles, whom the Jews considered unclean. It was unlawful for a Jew to join himself to any Gentile; an insurmountable barrier divided them. As we read in the words quoted from the Epistle to the Ephesians, Gentiles were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise." For this reason the Jews considered the Gentiles as unclean, common, spoke of them as dogs, and had no intercourse with them. It is of interest to notice that Peter tarried in Joppa; from this old city he is to be sent forth to preach the Gospel to Cornelius and his household. Centuries ago another Jew had come to Joppa with a solemn message from his God, which he was commissioned to bear far hence to the Gentiles. Jonah, the prophet, took a ship from Joppa and refused obedience to the divine call.

But here is one who is obedient to the heavenly vision and who is to bring a higher message to the Gentiles, the good news of a free and full salvation. That Peter, the Apostle of the circumcision, was chosen for this great errand, was an important hint that the middle wall of partition had been broken down and that believing Jews and Gentiles were to form one new man. Yet with the vision he had which opened the way for Peter to go to the Gentiles; and the great results he had witnessed when Cornelius and his household believed, and the Holy Spirit fell upon them, the Apostle Peter could later in Antioch put up the same wall of partition which he knew was broken down. "For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come (Jews from Jerusalem), he withdrew and

separated himself, fearing them, which were of the circumcision" (Gal. ii: 12). He then built again the things he had destroyed.

The events of the tenth chapter are divinely pre-arranged; and both Cornelius and those with him, who were to hear the Gospel, and Peter the messenger, are prepared for it. Peter is divinely prepared and instructed to go, and Cornelius is prepared to send and to hear.

We divide the chapter into four parts.

I. Cornelius of Caesarea and his Preparation (Verses 1-8).

II. The trance-vision of Peter in Preparation for his Mission (Verses 9–16).

III. Peter with Cornelius at Caesarea (Verses 17–33).

IV. Peter Preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles (Verses 34–43).

V. The interrupted Message (Verses 44–48).

I. Cornelius of Caesarea and his Preparation to hear the Gospel.

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, a devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; and when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. (Verses 1–8.)

The city in which Cornelius dwelt is mentioned first, and it will not be out of place to give some information about that ancient city. It must not be confounded with another Caesarea, of which we read in the Gospel, Caesarea Philippi. The Caesarea here was situated between Joppa and Dora. Augustus, the Emperor, gave this city to Herod; he made a most beautiful city out of it, spending immense sums of money. It was a Gentile city, though many Jews live there also. Cornelius was a centurion, who was at the head of a band, which was known by the name of "the Italian." A legion in the Roman army had 6,000 men. Each legion was divided into 10 cohorts of 600 each, and a cohort was divided into six centuries, that is, a hundred men in each century. Cornelius was a centurion, he had charge of one of these subdivisions of a cohort. Of another centurion we read in the Gospels. He was in character much like Cornelius, for it is said of him "he loveth our nation and hath built us a synagogue" (Luke vii: 5). It is striking that two centurions, soldiers of rank, should be so prominently mentioned in connection with the Gospel. The Holy Spirit had done a gracious work in both of these Gentile soldiers. Cornelius must have been a man of authority. His name indicates this, for he belonged to the house to which also belonged the Scipios and Sulla. He was well known to the whole Jewish nation (verse 22); he also had a large circle of friends in Caesarea. But he had more than a good report. He was a devout man, one that feared God with all his house, and who showed his piety by almsgiving and by prayer. "He prayed to God alway." He belonged to that class of Gentiles who, illumined by the Holy Spirit, had turned to God from idols, to serve the true and the living God. He was godly and a converted man before Peter ever came to him and preached the Gospel in his house. It is wrong, therefore, to speak of the event described in this chapter as the conversion of Cornelius. Nor was he a proselyte who had become circum-

cised and accepted Judaism. Of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ for himself and the blessed assurance of that salvation he knew nothing. It was at the ninth hour when Cornelius had a divine visitation. He was praying (verse 30) when a man stood before him in bright clothing. It seems Cornelius observed the Jewish hours of prayer; the ninth hour was 3 P.M., the time of the evening oblation. The appearing of the angel filled Cornelius with fear. The angel brought him the assurance that God had heard his prayers and that his good works were pleasing to God. They sprung from faith. God thus owned him. Sometimes people ask if Cornelius had died before Peter had had a chance to preach the Gospel to him, would he have perished? Certainly not.

The angel also gave him the directions for sending to Peter, and where Peter was to be found, with whom he lodged and where his lodging house was located. Peter was to tell him what he ought to do. From this we may gather that his prayer must have been to God for light and guidance. How blessed and full of comfort all this is! The Lord observed this devout centurion, He heard his prayers. His eye was upon Peter likewise and He knew his movements. And this is still the case. His loving, watching eye is upon all who are His. He still directs and guides those who depend on Him. What honor to serve such a Lord! Yet how little our poor, failing hearts enter into all this. How often we doubt and fear when faith should rejoice and praise.

Cornelius called at once two of his household servants and a devout soldier, and after he had acquainted them with the divine message and direction he had received, he sent them to Joppa, and they in due time reached their destination. While they were inquiring for Simon the tanner's house at the seaside, the chosen messenger had his vision.

II. The trance-vision of Peter in preparation for his mission.

> On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. (Verses 9–16.)

The messenger needed a preparation as well as Cornelius. As a Jew, though filled with the Spirit, he needed a special revelation to send him forth to the Gentiles. On the day of Pentecost he had declared: "For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are *afar off*, as many as the Lord our God shall call." Those "afar off" are the Gentiles. Peter then did not realize the far-reaching meaning of this utterance. And when he heard from the Lord's own lips the great commission to preach the Gospel to every creature, he little understood that it meant the Gentiles. Had some one demanded suddenly of Peter before this event occurred, that he should go and associate with Gentiles, enter their houses and speak to them concerning Christ, he would have drawn back in astonishment, if not in horror. But now the hour is come when it is to be known that indeed the middle wall of partition is broken down. Peter had tarried many days in Joppa. Nothing is said of further service he rendered in that city. He may have been waiting on the Lord for guidance. The messengers of Cornelius were nearing Joppa when Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. He still maintained Jewish

forms. He had not yet broken his fast and while on the flat roof he fell into a trance. The vision he saw, coming out of the opened heaven, was a vessel like a great sheet. The four corners were together and thus the sheet was let down upon the earth. The sheet contained clean and unclean animals.

The voice from heaven demanded that Peter should kill and eat. And he who rebuked his Lord while on earth, there at Caesarea Philippi, when he said, after the Lord announced His coming passion, "Be it far from Thee" (Matt. xvi: 22), does so here again on the housetop of Caesarea. He said, "Not so, Lord." He protests that he had never eaten anything common or unclean. The voice came again the second time, telling him, "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common." Thrice the same thing was done, and then straightway the vessel was received up into heaven. It returned to the place from which it had been lowered.

And what is the meaning? The vessel is the type of the church. The four corners represent the four corners of the earth. The clean animals it contained, the Jews; the unclean, the Gentiles. But all in that vessel are cleansed. The Grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ has cleansed those who are in Christ. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (2 Cor. vi: 11). Jew and Gentile believing, redeemed by blood, saved by Grace, washed and sanctified, are put into one body. What the great Apostle to the Gentiles wrote to the Ephesians is here made known in a vision.

"The Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel" (Eph. iii: 6.)

The vessel came down from heaven and disappeared there. This reveals the heavenly origin and the heavenly destiny of the church. The church is a heavenly revelation,

and, as the vessel disappeared in heaven, so will the church some day be taken up into heaven to enter upon her heavenly destination. Such are the lessons which this vision clearly teaches.

III. Peter with Cornelius at Caesarea.

> Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them. (Verses 17–20.)

Peter was in doubt about the vision. What did it mean? Did it mean that all distinction between clean and unclean animals was to be abolished and that the great dietary instructions divinely given through Moses were to be abandoned? Perhaps the words of the Lord came back to him, when He had said, "Do ye not perceive that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man it cannot defile him." He was deeply exercised about the vision to know its deeper meaning. But the Lord Himself had the interpretation of his vision ready for Peter. Just at that moment the messengers of Cornelius, who had asked their way to Simon's house at the seaside, had arrived at the gate. God was arranging everything, even in the smaller details. His purpose and plan could not fail, nor can it ever fail. Nothing could hinder that which was to be accomplished. And so it is still. *We need to fear no failure, nor do we need to worry, if we are in His plan.* And when these men were inquiring for Simon, surnamed Peter, whether he lodged there, Peter was still in deep thought on the vision. He did not hear the calling of the men at the gate. But another One spoke to him. "The Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek

thee. Arise, therefore, and get thee down and go with them nothing doubting, for I have sent them." The Holy Spirit now begins His directions. The words reveal the truth of the personality of the Holy Spirit in a very striking way. "I have sent them" is what the Holy Spirit declares. And He who sent the three men to summon Peter to Caesarea, also commanded Peter to arise and to go with them without any hesitation.

> Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius, and said, Behold, I am he whom you seek: what *is* the cause wherefore ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. Then called he them in, and lodged *them*. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied them. (Verses 21–23.)

How great must have been Peter's astonishment, when he faced suddenly the three Gentiles at the gate. But could he doubt after such a vision? Was not the presence of these three men, uncircumcised, unclean Gentiles, an explanation of the vision? The Holy Spirit furthermore had told him that they were sent by Himself and that he was to go with them. And the men now told him what had happened to Cornelius, the devout centurion, and that an angel of God had directed him to Peter. The full light must have flashed upon the Apostle of the circumcision. He called them in and lodged them. This was certainly breaking away from Jewish customs. On the next morning we see a company leaving Joppa. Peter was not like Jonah, who fled from Joppa, but he leaves in obedience to the divine call, accompanied by certain brethren and the three messengers of Cornelius.

> And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near

friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I *unto you* without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner by the seaside: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God. (Verses 24–33.)

While the company was journeying on towards the city, Cornelius, who had called together his kinsmen and near friends, was waiting for the heaven-sent messenger. With eager anticipation, longing for the blessed truth he was to hear, he waited for Peter's arrival. And then he came. No sooner did Cornelius see Peter than he fell down at his feet and worshipped. This happened outside of Cornelius' house, perhaps at a distance from it. The first act he did was to fall at the Apostle's feet and to do him divine honor. In this he betrayed his heathen training. Remembering the vision of the angel he looked upon Peter as deserving the greatest honor. But Peter would not tolerate this for a moment. Lifting Cornelius up, he said, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." What Cornelius did was an act of worship. The same word Satan used when he demanded that the Lord Jesus Christ should fall down and worship him. God alone is to be worshipped. Such reverence

which Cornelius did is not to be rendered to a mere man nor to an angel (see Rev. xix:10 and xxii:9). "Worship God;" the Apostle John is told as he fell at the feet of the angel which showed him the things he saw. Some Christians have declared that even the Lord Jesus Christ should not be worshipped. But this is a serious mistake. The Lord Jesus Christ is God and worship belongs to him. "That all should honor the Son, *even as they honor* the Father; he that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him" (John v:23). But what a contrast between Peter and those who claim to be the successors of Peter! That wicked man-made priesthood, which in its assumption has been the corruption of Christianity, demands honor and reverence from man. The pope and the priests accept reverence from man, which belongs only to the Lord. Ritualism, whether in Romish, Greek or Protestant form, always exalts a man and looks upon sinful man as having authority and therefore entitled to honor and worship. "His Worship," "His Grace," "His Reverence," "His Eminence," "His Holiness," etc., are the titles attached by ritualistic Christendom to men. For this there is no authority whatever in the Word of God. Peter's action here repudiates the whole thing. His Epistle in which by the Spirit of God he teaches the priesthood of *all* believers and not once mentions anything about himself, as holding a place above the other believers, is a complete refutal of traditional Christendom. Indeed, Ritualism is a return to heathenish customs; it is idolatry. Such is the teaching of Galatians iv:9–11.

Then Peter went with Cornelius into the house, telling him of how God had in the vision on the house top delivered him from the traditional Jewish prejudices and that he had now full liberty to enter into the house of a non-Jew and did no longer consider such an act unlawful. Asking Cornelius for what intent he had sent for him, the centurion

rehearses once more the answer which God had sent him, when he had prayed. He closes his address to Peter with those familiar words, "Now, therefore, are we all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." How beautiful all this is and how comforting to the heart! In His days upon the earth our Lord had said: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John x:16). Here in His own blessed way the risen Christ accomplishes what He predicted. The other sheep are the Gentiles, the one flock* is the church and the one shepherd over all the Lord Jesus Christ. *He* was the actor in this great event. He drew Cornelius and spoke to him. And He is still the same Lord, who adds to His flock. He still calls the other sheep.

Cornelius and his kinsmen knew the messenger was sent of God and that the message he brings was God's message. Peter knew he was sent and that souls had been prepared to hear the message. How blessed the meetings of God's people might be if such were always the case, and the servant of Christ were conscious in dependence on the Lord as His messenger, sent of God, and if those who come to hear, came expecting God's own message for their souls.

IV. Peter preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles.

> Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about

*Not *fold* as the authorized version has it. Judaism was a fold, but Christianity, according to the New Testament, knows nothing of a fold, but there is *one* flock.

doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. (Verses 34–43.)

There is a great difference between Peter's address to the Gentiles and his previously reported addresses to the Jews. The word repentance so prominent in his witness to Jerusalem is absent entirely. These words of Peter may be divided into three parts:

1. The remarks introductory to the Gospel. Peter declares that he perceives that God is not a respecter of persons. This statement was made already in the Old Testament. See Deut. x:17; 2 Chronicles xix:7 and Job xxxiv:19. The Holy Spirit brings this to Peter's remembrance. Peter had previously looked upon God as a respecter of persons, but his experience had convinced him that such was not the case. The same truth is very significantly mentioned in the opening chapters of Romans, the chapters which so clearly prove that there is no difference, but that all, Jews and Gentiles, have sinned and come short of the glory of God. In Romans ii:10–11 we read: "But glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good to the Jew first and also to the Gentiles." The same truth Peter states here: "but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." However, this does not mean, as it is so often declared, that the heathen's natural light and acquired morality renders him acceptable in the sight of God. The fear of God and the working of righteousness is not the product of the natural heart, but

the work of God Himself. Such work is not confined to the Jewish soul but is done also through grace in the Gentiles. This is the meaning of the statement. Peter adds something which is often overlooked. He tells Cornelius and his friends that they were not ignorant of the Word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. They knew of all this and had heard of it in some way. The blessing was in possession of the children of Israel. For this reason the centurion must have loved the nation Israel and did good unto them. But he had no assurance that that which was preached to Israel was to be enjoyed by him, nor did Peter realize it till God revealed it to him that the Gentiles were to be sharers of it.

2. Then Peter explains that word and briefly rehearses the facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth. God had anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power. God was with Him. It was demonstrated by what He did, going about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil. They had been witnesses of all this. In a brief sentence Peter mentions the death of Christ, that *they* slew Him and hanged Him on a tree. Then follows the declaration of His resurrection. God raised Him up the third day. But He was not seen by all the people, but only by those whom God had chosen; who did eat and drink with Him.

With what interest the centurion and those with him must have listened to this blessed message, much of which was known to them by hearsay, but here stood Peter, one of the eye witnesses of all this which had happened. One directly sent by God was telling out all this in their presence. But he was a Jew, who spoke these words. They were Gentiles. What meaning had all this for them? The third part of Peter's address makes this clear. It brings the blessed Gospel of Christ home to their hearts.

3. The Apostle speaks next of the fact that Christ had given them a commission. He commanded them to preach unto the people and to testify that it is He which God ordained to be the judge of quick and dead. But the centurion and his company could not take any comfort in this preaching. Who else were the people but the Jewish people to whom that risen One had given commandment to preach. The Holy Spirit might have worded His message in another way, which would have revealed the truth in a general way. He might have said that the Lord had given a commission which said: "Go ye into *all* the world, preach the Gospel to *every* creature." From this they might have reasoned, we are creatures of God, therefore the Gospel is for us. He chose another, a more precious way, a way which was to bring blessing to Peter's heart as well. The truth flasheth at once into Peter's heart and mind as he spoke. "To Him," he declares, "give all the prophets witness that through His Name WHOSOEVER believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Some have made the statement that Peter and the other Apostles were not obedient to the Lord's command when they tarried in Jerusalem, that it was the Lord's will for them to spread the Gospel among the Gentiles at once. Instead of carrying out the commission they abode in that city. However, this view is incorrect. They acted according to God's will. Peter did not realize the full meaning of the Lord's purpose until the proper time had come for it and then the power of God made it clear to Him. It was revealed to Peter as he spoke these words that there was indeed no difference, that God is no respecter of persons. The truth so fully revealed in a doctrinal way in Romans iii:22 that the righteousness of God, by faith in Jesus Christ is unto *all* and upon *all* them that believe, Jew and Gentile, bursts upon the Apostle of the circumcision through divine illumination. Blessed and precious sentence, which Peter uttered—

"through His Name *whosoever* believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Yes, *whosoever*, it is the word which tells out the meaning of the Gospel for a lost and guilty world. "Whosoever"—the Lord had used it Himself knowing the blessed results of His work on the cross. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." And when God closes His Holy Word on the last page, He must tell a sinful world once more that blessed word God's own redeemed people love so well. "And *whosoever* will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii:17).

The great truth has been spoken for the first time. The full and free good news of salvation through His Name has been offered for the first time to Gentiles. What is the result?

V. The interrupted Message.

> While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured forth the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized, in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days. (Verses 44–48.)

Peter's message was suddenly interrupted. He intended to continue; he had only begun to speak (Chapter xi: 15) when he was arrested. The Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the Word. Cornelius and those with Him had been ignorant of this very fact, which Peter had made known. They heard that all this salvation, the remission of sins, was for them and in that moment as they heard the Word they believed and as soon as they believed, the very moment they

accepted this blessed message, the Holy Spirit fell on them. It was then demonstrated that the gift of the Holy Spirit is given by hearing of faith. The apostle of the Gentiles wrote later to the foolish Galatians, who were falling from grace by going back under the law, "this only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. ii:2). Even so in this blessed Gospel the sealing with the Spirit and much else is received in believing. Something new had taken place. On Pentecost it meant water baptism as a condition of receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts ii:38) and the remission of sins; in Samaria the Apostles, Peter and John, according to the wisdom of God, had to lay on hands, but here without water baptism and laying on of hands the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles. Nor was there any process of seeking, surrendering, examining themselves, giving up, praying for it, but by hearing of faith, in believing the message of the Gospel the Holy Spirit fell on them. And to show that every barrier between Jew and Gentile had been removed, that nothing inferior had been bestowed upon Gentiles, than that which came upon the believing Jews on the day of Pentecost, Cornelius, his kinsmen and friends spoke with tongues and magnified God. It was the conclusive evidence that Gentiles, uncircumcised and unbaptized, received the Holy Spirit like the Jews. "And as I began to speak the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us in the beginning."

Water baptism follows. Up to this chapter water baptism preceded the gift of the Holy Spirit. This shows the place water baptism holds on the ground of grace. Water baptism has no place in the proclamation of the Gospel of Grace. It is not a means of grace, nor a sacrament. Peter, however, does not slight nor ignore baptism. "Can any man forbid water?" Then he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. This shows that not Peter himself did this act; it is therefore not a ministerial thing. This, too,

was done here in anticipation of what should be made of baptism through "ordained men" who claim apostolic succession.

Peter was requested to tarry with the happy company certain days. No doubt he must have fulfilled their request. What blessed intercourse they must have had!

CHAPTER XI.

The present chapter we divide into four parts:

I. Peter's defence in Jerusalem and its result (Verses 1–18).

II. The Foundation of the Church in Antioch (Verses 19–21).

III. Barnabas sent to Antioch (Verses 22–26).

IV. The Prophecy of Agabus (Verses 27–30).

I. Peter's defence in Jerusalem and its results.

And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order *unto* them, saying, I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. And behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them,

as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. (Verses 1–18.)

Peter had tarried certain days with the happy company in Caesarea, no doubt, telling them more of the Lord, of His life and miracles, His death and resurrection. How blessed this fellowship must have been! It fully demonstrated that the middle wall of partition had been broken down and that the believing Jews and Gentiles were one in Christ Jesus. But the report of his action and that the Gentiles had received the Word of God reached the apostles and brethren in Judea. Instead of creating rejoicing over what God had done, contention arose and the danger of a division was imminent. Failure is seen once more. Murmurings had arisen before (Chapter vi); but here party spirit showed itself for the first time. This subtle work of the flesh (Gal. v: 20*) was ready to make a rend among the brethren. We must bear in mind that two classes of Jews composed the assemblies in Jerusalem and in Judea. The Hellenists and the more strict Palestinian Jews. To the latter class belonged many Pharisees and the large number of priests, who had believed. These were all zealous for the law (Acts xxi: 20).

These still looked upon the Gentiles as unclean. Their belief was that a Gentile in order to be saved had to submit to circumcision and become a Jew. Years later we find them very outspoken about this in the record of the first church council held in Jerusalem. Publicly they stated "that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep

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*The words translated in Gal. v:20 by " seditions, heresies," really mean " disputes, schools of opinion."

the law of Moses" (Acts xv:5). Here the party spirit asserts itself and the dissenters are called "they of the circumcision," which means that some of them pressed circumcision and the law unduly, for all the Jewish believers were of the circumcision. Gradually they became a strong party in the church. Striking it is, too, that Peter is called later "the apostle of the circumcision," and later his action in Antioch, so inconsistent with the events in Caesarea, brought forth the divine rebuke through the apostle of the Gentiles (Gal. i:14). The eating with the Gentiles was the one point of accusation here. "They seemed to have heard the fact, without any circumstantial detail from some reporter, who gave the objectionable part of it, as it is not uncommon in such cases, all prominence."*

Peter's answer is most instructive. He does not refer to his apostolic authority. He might have reminded them of the fact that the Lord at another Caesarea had committed unto him "the Keys of the kingdom of heaven," and that in virtue of this commission he had acted. But no reference to that is made at all by him. Nor does he go to his fellow apostles to lay the matter before them. His defence consists in a rehearsal of what had taken place. We do not need to follow this again, as we have already done so in the previous chapter. The statements given proved irresistible. Here were facts which were unanswerable. They heard these things, they held their peace. But more than that, they began to praise instead of strife; they glorified God. Gratefully they acknowledged that God had granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life. In the course of time this wonderful opening of the door to the Gentiles was forgotten and "they of the circumcision" became a strong party. Peter but briefly refers in Acts xv to that, which he so fully describes here.

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*Dean Alford in Greek Testament.

II. The Foundation of the Church in Antioch.

Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. (Verses 19–21.)

The nineteenth verse connects with Chapter viii:4. The great persecution had scattered the believers. Philip had been the chosen instrument to bring the gospel to Samaria. That had to be reported first. And now we are to learn what others did and where they proclaimed the blessed Gospel. They went to Phenice. This was a strip of coast land some 120 miles long. Tyre and Sidon were cities of Phenice. There the Gospel was preached and with blessed results, which appear later in this book (xxi: 4–7; xxvii: 3). Cyprus was closely connected with Phenice. Many ships sailed constantly from the Phenician ports to that island. Barnabas and Mnason (xxi: 16) were from Cyprus. Then others must have gone along the coast and reached Antioch. They all preached to the Jews only. But some of these evangelists were men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, when they came to Antioch, preached the Lord Jesus to the Greeks, that is to the Gentiles. A great number of these turned unto the Lord and believed. Antioch comes into prominence as the other great center of Christianity, second only to Jerusalem. Here the preaching to the Gentiles was begun and fully recognized by the church in Jerusalem.

From here the great missionary movement of the apostolic age started. Here Saul appears again to take from now on, as the apostle of the Gentiles, a leading part. In Antioch, furthermore, the disciples were called "Christians" for the first time. In Jerusalem, this name was unknown; they were termed "the sect of the Nazarenes." All this brings

out the great importance as the center of Christianity on Gentile ground. This importance has led some to see in Antioch the place where the church began to come into existence. It is denied that the day of Pentecost was the birthday of the church, but the claim is made that the church was born in Antioch. This is a far-fetched theory, which lacks scriptural support. We have already shown that Pentecost was the day on which the church began. No event like the baptism of the Holy Spirit took place in Antioch, but Antioch shared in that which had happened in Jerusalem. The Antiochan Gentile believers were simply added by the same Spirit to the church, the foundations of which are the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone (Eph. ii:20). Antioch itself was an influential city founded by Seleucus Nicator 300 B. C. It was a beautiful city situated on the river Orontes, with marvellous scenery. It was a luxurious, voluptuous city, steeped in the greatest immoralities. Here the Gospel was to be manifested as the power of God unto salvation.

It is a very striking contrast with what goes before in this great historical book that the instruments used in preaching the Gospel to the Antiochenes, and in the establishment of the church among them, are not named. The true character of the church, independent of any human, earthly authority, dependent on Him who is Head over all, is indicated in this fact. And yet, as we shall see directly, the new departure had to be acknowledged and recognized in Jerusalem. It needed, however, not apostles to lay their hands upon them, so that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

III. Barnabas sent to Antioch.

Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with pur-

pose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. (Verses 22–26.)

The wonderful work done in Antioch, the assembling of large numbers of Greeks, who had turned to the Lord, induced the church in Jerusalem to send forth Barnabas. The church in Jerusalem felt a responsibility towards this new evidence of the power of their risen and glorified Lord. They wanted to know in Jerusalem if the reports were true, and if true the assembly had to be recognized as such. This shows that the Oneness of the church, though not yet *fully* made known by revelation, was nevertheless realized through the Holy Spirit. And that a blessed relationship existed between the assembly in Jerusalem and the one in Antioch, is seen by Peter's visit in that city, when in the liberty wherewith Christ, has made us free, he ate with these believing Gentiles and enjoyed fellowship with them (Gal. ii:11–12). Barnabas was well fitted for the mission. However, he does not come as an apostolic delegate, to baptize, to confirm or to admit these new believers into some fellowship, but his mission was simply to see if "the tidings of these things" were true. And if true the recognition of these Gentile believers had to follow.

Barnabas when he came saw the grace of God. The original is more emphatic: "the grace which was that of God" is a better reading. He saw that a genuine work of the Holy Spirit had been accomplished. This filled his heart with joy. His exhortation was that with purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord. Nothing else was needed. These Gentile believers were the Lord's and as such they were to cleave to the Lord. The unity with the

fellow believers in Jerusalem was with this recognized. Barnabas did not remain idle while he was in Antioch. The Holy Spirit used him mightily. The exhortations of the good Barnabas, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, resulted in a great crowd which was added unto the Lord. This latter expression is the same as used in chapter ii: 42 and 47.

But here was a great field; a strong man was needed. No angel nor heavenly vision points out that man. Barnabas knew him, and guided by the indwelling Spirit, the Son of consolation, for this is the meaning of Barnabas, departs to go to the nearby Tarsus to find Saul. Saul was his man. Barnabas had introduced him to the apostles and there can be no question at all that Barnabas knew from Saul's lips and experience, that he had been called by the Lord to preach to the Gentiles. He found him in Tarsus. Patiently Saul must have waited for the right moment when his life's work should begin. That time had now come. We see them together in Antioch for a whole year; they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. A brief sentence tells us that these Gentiles, who had become believers in the Lord, were first called Christians in Antioch.

The movement had attracted the attention of the outsiders. The Jews, it is certain, did not give this name, but the Gentiles invented it. Antioch was famous for its readiness to jeer and call names; it was known by its witty epigrams. So they coined a new word, "*Christianoi*"—Christians. It is used exclusively by outsiders, as seen in the case of Agrippa, also see 1 Pet. iv: 16. Jews and Gentiles alike were called by this name, "Christians," so that it bears testimony to the oneness of Jew and Gentile in Christ.

IV. The Prophecy of Agabus.

And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the

world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. (Verses 27–30.)

An additional proof is found in these verses of the intercourse and fellowship, which existed between the assembly in Jerusalem and the assembly in Antioch. Prophets came to Antioch from Jerusalem. This is the first time that New Testament prophets are mentioned. They came as a gift of the Lord to His church next to the apostles. Many were prophets in the early days of Christianity. However, their gift must not be limited to predictions. Any one who speaks of divine things out of the fullness of a heart, which is in blessed communion with God, prophesies. These spiritual gifts were led from Jerusalem to Antioch to minister there. Prominent amongst them is Agabus.* He made a prediction that a great famine should soon come. It came during the days of Claudius Caesar. Then follows a precious action, which clearly shows again the blessed fellowship and unity of the church. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea. The church in Jerusalem was poor, the disciples in Antioch were more blessed with earthly things. And now, according to their ability, it was an individual matter, they gave. They sent temporal gifts to Jerusalem from which they had received so much spiritual blessing. Barnabas and Saul carried the fellowship to the elders of the assembly in Jerusalem.

*The same Agabus who appears in xxi:11.

CHAPTER XII.

With this chapter we reach the conclusion of the second part of this book. Jerusalem had heard the second offer concerning the Kingdom and mercy was ready even for the murderers of the Prince of Life. But that offer was rejected. Stephen's testimony followed by his martyrdom marked the close of that second offer to the city where our Lord had been crucified. Then broke out a great persecution and they were scattered abroad except the Apostles. With the eighth chapter we saw the Gospel preached in Judea and Samaria. From our last chapter we learned that others who were driven out of Jerusalem preached the Word in Phenice, Cyprus and Antioch. In this second section of the Book of Acts the conversion of Saul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, Peter's acts and his preaching to Cornelius, the foundation of the church in Antioch as a second great center of Christianity, are reported. The twelfth chapter, with which this part of Acts closes, is an interesting one. It is not only interesting on account of the historical information it contains, but also because of its dispensational foreshadowing. Once more we are introduced to Jerusalem and see another great tribulation. The wicked King is reigning over the city. James is killed with the sword, while Peter is imprisoned but wonderfully delivered; the evil King, who claimed divine power and worship, is suddenly smitten by the judgment of the Lord. Then the Word grew and multiplied, Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, from where the great missionary operations were soon to be conducted. The events in Jerusalem, James' martyrdom under King Herod, Peter's imprisonment and deliverance, as well as the fate of the persecuting King foreshadow the events with which this present age will close. After the true church is taken from the earth, that is when 1 Thess. iv: 16–

17 is fulfilled, the great tribulation will take place. While great tribulation and judgment will come upon the whole world, *the* great tribulation will come upon the Jewish people who have returned in part to their own land. In the midst of the masses of unbelieving Jews, there will be found a remnant of God-fearing Jews, who are converted and bear testimony to the truth. A wicked King, the man of sin, the false Messiah, will then be in power in Jerusalem. Part of that Jewish remnant will suffer martyrdom; these are represented by James, whom Herod, the type of the Antichrist, slew. Another part will be delivered as Peter was delivered. Herod's presumption and fate clearly points to that of the Antichrist (2 Thess. ii: 3–8). All this may well be kept in mind as we study this chapter in detail.

I. The great persecution of the church by Herod Agrippa I (Verses 1–5).

II. The miraculous deliverance of Peter (Verses 6–17).

III. The Presumption and Judgment of King Herod (Verses 18–23).

IV. Barnabas and Saul returning to Antioch (Verses 24–25).

I. The great persecution of the church by Herod Agrippa I.

> Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) And when he had apprehended him he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. (Verses 1–5.)

The second great persecution broke out. It was about that time when the events had taken place with which the previous chapter closed. Herod, the King, mentioned here

is known in history as Herod Agrippa I. He was the grandson of Herod the Great. First he had the tetrarchy of Philip (Luke iii: 1), then he received the territory of Herod Antipas, Galilee and Peraea; lastly through political intrigue he added to his Kingdom Judea and Samaria. Much of his time was spent in Rome, where he lived extravagantly. When he came to Jerusalem he tried in every possible way to gain the good will of the Jews by an outward observance of the law and defence of their customs. The persecution of the church was no doubt inspired by the desire to gain favour with the Jews. As far as the historical account goes, it seems his hatred was exclusively directed against the Apostles; James was killed by the sword. This James was the brother of John, one of the three disciples who are specially mentioned in the Gospels. With his younger brother John and Peter, he had witnessed the raising of Jairus' daughter, had been on the mount of transfiguration and in Gethsemane. No record is given of his work as an Apostle nor anything about his trial; the details of his martyrdom are also passed over. He was put to death in the same way as John the Baptist, beheaded with the sword. This mode of death was looked upon by the Jews as the most disgraceful. The Talmud makes this statement and informs us that this punishment was used in case someone misled the people to worship other gods. Whether this was the accusation or not which was brought against James, we do not know. The two sons of Zebedee, James and John, had desired to sit at the right and at the left hand in His Kingdom. The Lord had answered them, after their declaration that they could drink the cup that he was to drink of, and had said, "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with" (Matt. xx: 23), and here is the fulfillment of this prediction in the life of James. He is the first Apostle who died and the only Apostle of whose death we have an account given in the New Testament. That no record is

given of the details of His suffering and death is also significant. Well has one said: "In days of ardent faith and also of expectation of the Lord's speedy return, death sank into its true place as simply a change of condition; it was but a falling asleep. Accordingly instead of dwelling with morbid interest on the painful details of the martyr's sufferings, the church pressed forward to reap with joy the harvest of their blood."*

The bloody deed pleased the Jews and the wicked King stretched out his hand against Peter and put him into prison. Peter was the only remaining Apostle in Jerusalem. This seems to be clear from verse 17. Peter requests that his deliverance be made known to James (the Lord's brother) and to the brethren. His fellow Apostles, the ten, are not mentioned by him. They were away from Jerusalem at that time. That one of the twelve had been taken away and the others, with the exception of Peter, were not in Jerusalem, is a hint that their work in connection with the nation was ended.

Peter was put into prison for the third time. The wonderful deliverance of the same man as recorded in chapter iv must have been still vividly in the minds of many of the Jews and it may have led to the great caution exercised in this imprisonment. Four quaternions of soldiers guarded him. He was in the inner ward. A soldier was on each side and he was bound with two chains and the keepers before the door kept the prison. Thus he was kept in that prison. Cruel Herod would stamp out the Nazarenes and Peter was to share James' fate.†

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*R. B. Rackham.

†Four Herods are mentioned in the New Testament. All are types of the Anti-Christ and all were energized by Satan. Herod the Great who had the children of Bethlehem killed. The Herod who killed John the Baptist. The Herod who slew James, and the Herod Agrippa before whom Paul stood and preached.

But prayer was made without ceasing by "the church unto God for him." Of this Herod knew nothing; with this fact the cruel despot did not reckon. Nothing is said of prayer having been made for James. Perhaps his martyrdom was a sudden event. Or it may have been that the Holy Spirit indicated at once that James was to glorify the Lord by his death and no prayer could then be made for his release. The church held a prayer-meeting and it was a prolonged prayer-meeting. However, the word translated "without ceasing" means "intensely." It was an intense prayer-meeting and of course was therefore carried on without ceasing. The prayer-meeting was held in a private house, as we shall see later. One member suffered and so all suffered. Prayer was their refuge; they were led into it by the Holy Spirit.

II. The miraculous deliverance of Peter.

And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals: and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of its own accord: and they went out and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at

the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the* door, and saw him, they were astonished. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place. (Verses 6–17.)

A few hours before Herod intended to carry out his wicked scheme the prayer of the church was answered. Peter was sleeping between the two soldiers, in all probability chained to each, so as to make another escape an impossibility. And why did Peter sleep so peacefully? It was not the sleep of exhaustion, but must have been the result of a calm mind trusting in the Lord. Perhaps he remembered in that prison the words which the risen Lord had addressed to him at the shore of the lake Tiberias: "When thou shalt be old thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Thus the Lord had spoken, signifying thereby by what death he should glorify God. He was not yet old. He knew his Lord was greater than poor, miserable Herod. Peter rested in the Lord and in His gracious word to him. Oh! that God's people might know the calm rest of faith. Our lives are in His hands. He is over us and no enemy can harm us; nothing can touch us without His will.

An angel appeared and delivered Peter. The chains fell from his hands. The light of glory shone in the prison. He obeyed the angel, following him as in a dream. The first and second ward passed, they came to the iron gate, which opened by itself. Outside in the street the angel departed. Then Peter realized that the Lord had sent an angel to deliver him. No further comment on the details of this mir-

acle is necessary. In spite of all the precautions, Peter was delivered, and once more the prison was empty. Still on Kingdom ground an angel was seen. Through this age the ministry of angels is hidden. This book closes with another prisoner, Paul, in Rome; no angel was sent to lead him forth. And ever after there have been unaccountable prisons in which the children of God suffered for Christ and for righteousness sake, but the heavens were silent and did not interfere. Thousands were tortured and dragged out a miserable existence in prison till death released them, and, though prayers ascended for their deliverance, no answer came. This has been a mystery to not a few and has been one of the taunts of infidelity. But one of the characteristics of the present age are the closed heavens.* They will not be closed forever. James' death and Peter's deliverance foreshadow the death of future Jewish saints during the tribulation and the miraculous deliverance of others.

Once more Peter goes to his own company. They are gathered in the house of Mary, the mother of John. The Mary here is the mother of John Mark, and she is here introduced for the first time in the Book of Acts; she was the aunt of Barnabas. The house must have been a large one, for there was a court-yard. In the spacious house a goodly number of believers were gathered, engaged in prayer. No leader was there, for we read that James and the brethren were absent. It was, as we say, an informal gathering, but the Holy Spirit was the leader. Perhaps they were still on their knees when Peter knocked for admission. The maid Rhoda (Rose) hastened to the gate. Gladness filled her heart when she recognized Peter's voice. For joy she forgot all about that latch at the gate, and instead of open-

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*We recommend to our readers the excellent book by Sir Robert Anderson "*The Silence of God.*" It deals with this question. The book can be ordered from us.

ing to Peter she ran back to the house to communicate the good news. She must have interrupted the prayers of the assembled company. The prayer had been answered and praise was now in order. Alas! there was no response from their side. Instead of believing that Peter had been delivered, they looked upon the happy, beaming face of Rhoda and said, "thou art mad." Not one of the company believed that Peter had been released. Rhoda was the one who believed that it was Peter. And this is undoubtedly the reason why her name is mentioned in this book. The poor maid, perhaps a slave girl, pleased God because she had faith. While there was great earnestness in that prayer meeting, when the prayer was answered, unbelief manifested itself.

When Rhoda could not be shaken in her belief that it was really Peter, the company tried to explain the knocking in a spiritualistic way. "It is his angel," they said. This is generally believed to mean that it was his "guardian angel." Upon this expression, much of the belief in guardian angels is founded. However, it is far-fetched to do so. They meant by this expression, the disembodied spirit of Peter. They thought that he had been martyred and that it was a kind of spiritistic manifestation of the fact. But the door was at last opened, and Peter stood safe and sound in their midst; then they were astonished.

After making known how he was delivered, he departed and went into another place. This left James, the Lord's brother, in Jerusalem. The other Apostles had gone and Peter makes likewise haste to leave Jerusalem. Surely this marks the conclusion of this transition period. Where did Peter go? We do not know. Roman Catholicism declares that he went to Rome. There is absolutely no proof for it, but all is against it. Peter never saw Rome. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans in 54, and there we learn that at that time no Apostle had visited that city. We see Peter back

in Jerusalem in chapter xv, and it is clear that he had not followed work among the Gentiles. He continued to hold to the gospel of the circumcision (Gal. ii:7–8).

III. The Presumption and Judgment of King Herod.

> Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Cesarea, and *there* abode. And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's *country*. And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is* the voice of a god, and not of man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. (Verses 18–23.)

The escape of Peter was soon discovered, and the soldiers, being responsible with their lives, according to Roman law, were of course greatly distressed. Herod sought for his prisoner, but he was beyond his reach. The keepers were put to death by the king. He followed the footsteps of his cruel grandfather, who had the children of Bethlehem killed.

He then left Jerusalem for Caesarea, where he had a magnificent palace. Some difficulty existed between him and the people of Tyre and Sidon. The Phoenician cities were dependent on Palestine for food, as their land was but a narrow strip along the seacoast. They were therefore forced to make peace, which they did through Blastus, their friend and the king's chamberlain. Most likely the interest of Blastus was gained by a bribe. It also seems that Herod must have cut off the supply of the Phoenicians. They could not buy nor sell. Thus they were forced to bow before the

king. In all this, he appears as a type of the man of sin, whose character Herod foreshadows.

Then a day came when an audience was granted unto the people. The king appeared in royal apparel. Josephus, the Jewish historian, informs us that his garment was made of the brightest silver, which, with the sunlight falling upon it, dazzled the eyes of the multitude. He sat on his throne, the bema, or judgment seat. Then he made an oration, most likely announcing to the ambassadors of Tyre and Sidon that he was now reconciled. The scene must have been a brilliant one. The people were carried away by the magnificent spectacle and flattering oration of the king, and cried out, "it is the voice of a god and not of a man." No doubt the aim of Herod was this very acclamation. He had planned it all. The zenith of his glory seemed reached. Monarchs were then deified, and Augustus, the emperor, was also worshipped. He gave not the glory to God, but usurped His Glory, and the result was a sudden judgment.

What happened to Herod is mentioned by Josephus. He, however, tries to shield the king, though he speaks of Herod's wickedness. He says that sudden pains attacked him, which were produced by the sight of an owl, a bird he dreaded, and which was seen sitting on one of the ropes of the awning of the theatre. The Word of God gives us the true account. It was the angel of the Lord that smote him, and he was eaten of worms. A most awful and loathsome disease took hold of him, and literally he was eaten, after a few days, of worms. "He was seized with violent internal pains, and carried to his palace. There he lingered five days in extreme agony; being eaten of worms, the cause of his intestine disorder."

The coming antichrist, too, will claim divine honors and assume the place of God. His end is foreshadowed in Herod's awful fate and the place which is beyond, "where the worm does not die."

IV. Barnabas and Saul returning unto Antioch.

But the word of God grew and multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark. (Verses 24–25.)

Nothing could hinder the victorious progress of the Word of God. It grew and was multiplied. Herod's removal by divine judgment must have had an influence for the truth. Then Barnabas, having been in Jerusalem, went back to Antioch, and John Mark accompanied him. The last verse connects closely with the beginning of the third great part of the book.

CHAPTER XIII.

The thirteenth chapter is the beginning of the third part of this book. The second great center of Christianity comes to the front. It is no longer Jerusalem, but the city of Antioch. The gospel which had been preached in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, which Cornelius and his house had heard, and accepted, is now in a special manner to go far hence to the Gentiles. The city in which the first great Gentile church had been established is the starting point. Peter, so prominent in the first twelve chapters of our book, is no longer the leading actor. He is mentioned only once in this second part of the Book of Acts. In the fifteenth chapter in connection with the council in Jerusalem, his voice is heard once more. The special work in connection with the kingdom of heaven, in opening the door to the Jews and Gentiles (Acts ii and chapter x) had been accomplished by him. Now he disappears from our view, though he continued to exercise his apostleship in connection with the circumcision (Galatians ii:7). Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, instead appears upon the scene and his wonderful activity is described in the remaining part of the book. The opposition and blindness of the Jews in a continued rejection of the gospel becomes fully evident throughout this section and the book itself closes with the testimony against them: "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." (Acts xxviii:28). Besides this we shall find in these chapters the acts of the Holy Spirit in the call and sending forth of the chosen instruments in the way He guided them, how He filled them, opened doors, and manifested His gracious power in the salvation of sinners and the establishment of

the church. We also find the acts of the enemy in opposing the progress of the gospel and in its perversion.

We divide the present chapter into four parts:

I. The divine choice and call. Barnabas and Saul separated unto the work (Verses 1–3).

II. The beginning of the journey and the first events in Cyprus (Verses 4–12).

III. The Gospel in Galatia. Paul's address in the synagogue (Verses 13–41).

IV. The Gospel rejected by the Jews; they turn to the Gentiles (Verses 42–52).

I. The divine choice and call. Barnabas and Saul separated unto the work.

> Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. (Verses 1–3.)

The time was towards the spring of the year 46. The picture unfolded in these few words is as important as it is precious. The new start is about to be made. The whole assembly was undoubtedly moved by the Spirit of God and impressed with the fact that an important work was now to be begun. The men who are mentioned were some of the gifts of the Lord in the assembly. The word "certain," however, should be omitted as it does not appear in the older manuscripts at all. Five names are given, the first being Barnabas and the last Saul, but the last, he who delighted

to call himself "less than the least of all the Saints," was through the Grace of God to take the first and prominent place. Then there was Lucius of Cyrene, an evangelist, Simeon, called Niger, who may have been an Ethiopian. Along side of him stands the name of one who moved in the highest circles, a foster brother of Herod, Manaen. Grace had not only saved them, but had given them gifts "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephes. iv: 12). They were together as a waiting company. Just as in the beginning of this book we behold a waiting company, so in the beginning of the second part we find believers waiting. But there is a marked difference. The waiting disciples in chapter i waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit. He came on the day of Pentecost. The waiting ones in Antioch waited, not for His coming, but for the Holy Spirit, who indwelt them, to speak and make His wishes known.

They ministered unto the Lord and fasted. The Greek word for ministering is "*Leitourgia*," from which comes the word Liturgy. Ritualism claims from this the scripturalness in using a set form in service. It has been stated that the assembled company remembered the Lord, when they were together in this way, and that it was then, when the Holy Spirit spoke. The argument used from ritualistic sides is the fact that the Greek church still calls the Communion "The Liturgy." From this the conclusion is derived that they were together remembering the Lord in the breaking of bread. This is, of course, far-fetched. However, it is true that in the Lord's Supper Christian believers minister to the Lord in the highest sense of the word. Whenever it is done in the power of the Spirit as a true act of worship, it is the exercise of our holy priesthood. We then offer up spiritual sacrifices, the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips. While we are comforted in the remembrance of His dying love, He, too, receives a portion from us and

beholds then His inheritance in His saints and thus we minister unto Him.

The ministry unto the Lord from the side of the gathered ones here was no doubt praise and prayer. They waited on the Lord. The Lord grant unto every reader this conception of prayer, that it is a ministry unto our blessed Lord in glory, and that He delights to receive such service from our feeble hearts and lips!

They were not in a hurry to rush into the new departure. They had formed no plans, had appointed no committee. Alas! all that which is so prominent in our modern day Christian activities is entirely absent in this great book of the beginning of the church on earth, and that which is most prominent in the divine record, dependence on the Lord and definite guidance by the Holy Spirit, is almost entirely absent today. In our present day great movements we hear men, money and methods emphasized, and, in great banquets and conventions, an enthusiasm is stirred up, which is but the expression of self-confidence and self-reliance. In the eyes of the world, the simple gathering in Antioch did not look like a great movement; but it was great because the Holy Spirit was the Person who started it and guided in it. And He loves humility, self-emptiness. If we cannot reproduce all this in our day, let us as individuals, called to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, serve and walk in dependence upon Himself, and trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The fasting mentioned was most likely specially appointed.

And it was then, while they were ministering to the Lord, that the Holy Spirit spoke. This is one of the strong passages from which we learn the Personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit. Another most important fact is brought here before us. All spiritual Christians long for a continued guidance by the Spirit. If we walk in the Spirit, then we are guided by the Spirit. This is a simple truth. And yet often

the children of God are perplexed. Some have followed impressions, or inner voices, which they thought were the voice of the Holy Spirit, but they were deceived. The important hint here is this "*As* they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said—." When we cast ourselves in dependence on the Lord, when we wait on Him and minister to Him, then we may expect confidently the Holy Spirit to speak. In His speaking here at this occasion we learn that He is on earth to be the guide for the church. He is come to take charge of the affairs of the church. The right to choose for service, to call and to send forth, belongs to Him. This is put into the foreground. The whole transaction rested with the Holy Spirit. The words He spoke were brief. "Separate unto Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Two of the assembled gifts were separated unto Him to undertake a special work. True Christian ministry is the exercise of a spiritual gift, which is of the Holy Spirit. The exercise of that gift in a practical way is to be under the control of the same blessed Person. The service rests not in the hands of the servant for self-choosing, nor in the hands of the church, but with the Holy Spirit.

And immediately after the Holy Spirit had thus spoken they acted in obedience to the divine call, laid hands upon them, and let them go. This action has been wrongly interpreted as an ordination. Hence we have the teaching and practice in evangelical Christendom of ordaining men to go out as missionaries, or ordaining them as pastors of churches or evangelists. Such an ordination is not taught here. It is not taught anywhere in the New Testament Scriptures. The authority to preach the Gospel cannot be conferred by one man upon another man, but it is "neither of men nor by man" (Gal. i:1). No man nor set of men, according to the New Testament, can give the authority to preach the Word of God. That is a gift from Him and, we state it again, the gift must be exercised through the guidance of the Holy

Spirit. This is the teaching of the New Testament. How the professing church has departed from this teaching and how much of the confusion and ruin in Christendom about us is the result of this departure, is only too evident. Multitudes of men have entered into and are today in, what is called "the Christian ministry," ordained by some session or conference, whom the Holy Spirit never called and set apart unto Himself. And the conditions are far worse in the denominations in which ordination in the form of apostolic succession is used to put man into the place of a "priest" in the church.

Now Barnabas and Saul needed no ordination whatever by which they were authorized to fill a certain office and preach the Word. They were both preachers and teachers. How could they be ordained to an office if they were in it for a good while? If they were to be ordained to something higher than the office of a prophet and teacher, it must have been the place of an apostle. But that could not be, for Paul was already an apostle.

But what did it mean when they laid hands on them? One of their number had uttered that which was the voice of the Holy Spirit. The assembly or church had heard this call. They accepted it as from the Holy Spirit and were obedient to it. Then by the laying on of hands they expressed outwardly their fellowship and identification with the two who had been set apart to do the work to which the Holy Spirit had called. They had nothing to do with their work but to wish them the blessing of the Lord showing their fellowship in it.

This is seen by the last sentence in the third verse. Unfortunately, the authorized version states that "They sent them way." Its correct rendering is "They let them go." The church, or the elders of the church, did not send them away. The very next verse guards against such a thought, for it tells us "They being sent forth by the Holy Spirit."

II. The beginning of the journey. The first events in Cyprus.

So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul (who also is called Paul) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him. And said, O full of all subtility and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. (Verses 4–12.)

They set forth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who had called them to this service and to Him, and not to men they looked. The first place mentioned is Seleucia. This was a fortified city, some fifteen miles from Antioch. No report is given of any work done in this city. The island of Cyprus, visible from the seacoast at Seleucia, the home of Barnabas, was the place they were guided to by the Spirit. The nearest port to Seleucia is Salamis; this they reached. Salamis had a large Jewish population and Barnabas and Saul preached the Word in the synagogues. John Mark is mentioned as being along as their helper. Some take it that he was to baptize the converts, but there is no evidence for it. He was simply an attendant, who assisted them in different ways, perhaps in preparing the simple meals and looking after other matters, so that Barnabas and Saul might give

themselves unhindered to the preaching of the Word. No record is given of the result of the testimony in Salamis. Nor is there anything said of their labors throughout the island. The Holy Spirit in giving us the narrative did not report their activity in detail, because He wanted the event in Paphos to take the prominent and first place in this first journey of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

And a significant event it was. There they found a sorcerer, a false prophet, a great instrument of Satan, ready to oppose the Gospel as it now was to be preached to the Gentiles. Such evil persons, the special instrument of the enemy, appear repeatedly in this book and always when the Gospel was carried in some new region. In Samaria it was Simon Magus, in Macedonia the damsel with the familiar spirit, and here it is the sorcerer, Bar-jesus. He was a Jew and his name means "Son of Jesus." The Cyprian name he carried was Elymas, which is not Greek and may mean "The Wise." Paphos was a wicked city of a very bad reputation; Aphrodite, the goddess Venus, was worshipped in a magnificent temple. It was a stronghold of Satan and he had his man there to oppose the messengers of God sent forth by the Holy Spirit. This false prophet with his significant name, a Jew, yet practicing the evil things of Oriental occultism, was in close connection with Sergius Paulus, the deputy of that country. He was most likely attached to the household of the deputy. Sergius Paulus was a searcher for the truth, for he called for the two Apostles to hear the Word of God from their lips. Then the Satanic opposition from the side of Elymas was brought out. It was an important moment, for it was the first time that the doctrine of Christ was presented to the Roman world. Satan through Elymas withstood the Apostles in their testimony and sought to keep Sergius Paulus from the faith. Then Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him. Just in the moment when Satan's power came into play the Holy Spirit filled the messenger to over-

come the wicked devices of the false prophet and pronounce judgment upon him. As in the case of Simon Magus, so here the Holy Spirit uncovers the true character of the impostor. He is a child of the devil and not a "Bar-Jesus," a son of Jesus, the Saviour. He claimed to be a prophet, in reality he was an enemy of all righteousness. He had perverted the right ways of the Lord and continued in this evil work. Then divine judgment is pronounced upon Elymas. "Thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season." The judgment was executed at once. A mist and darkness fell on him and he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand. Sergius Paulus then believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. There can be no question but Sergius Paulus was truly converted. If it be said that he was astonished at the sudden judgment, a doubt might be raised, but he was astonished at the *doctrine* of the Lord. Signs are for the Jews, but the Gentile needs no sign.

This false prophet, the Jew Bar-jesus, Elymas the sorcerer, is a type of apostate Judaism, which has turned away from the truth, rejected the Gospel and perverts the right ways of the Lord. Such Judaism became after rejecting the offer of God's mercy.

As Elymas tried to keep the Word of God from the Roman Sergius Paulus, so the Jews tried to keep from the Gentiles the Gospel, which they themselves had rejected. The judgment which fell upon the sorcerer is likewise significant. Blindness has been put judicially upon the Jews and without a leader they are groping around in the darkness. This judicial blindness was repeatedly predicted by the prophets. We find it mentioned in Isaiah vi:9–10. Their eyes were to be shut. Our Lord quotes this twice and each time in connection with His rejection in Matthew xiii:15 and John xii: 40. Then the Apostle Paul uses these words for the last time in the New Testament. See Acts xxiii: 25–28. The Salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles after the Jews refused to

accept it, and the Jews were blinded. But the blindness is not permanent. "Blindness in part has happened to Israel *until* the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans xi:25). Corresponding to this is the blindness of Elymas, which was to be "for a season." The season is this present age. When this age is over, the judicial blindness, the veil which is upon their hearts, will be removed.

That this incident is the first one reported in the beginning of the great missionary movement is in full keeping with the scope of the Book of Acts. Of equal significance is it that for the first time, and that in connection with this incident, the name of Paul is mentioned. Some have suggested that he took the name in honor of Sergius Paulus, but that is incorrect. Paul is a Roman name, and means "little." Later he writes of himself as "less than the least of all saints." He took the lowest place and the name, which signifies this comes now into prominence. Barnabas is taking the second place; not Barnabas and Saul, but Paul and Barnabas is now the order.

After the significant incident in Paphos, the judicial blindness of Elymas and the faith of the Gentile deputy in the doctrine of the Lord, the Apostle Paul and his company loosed from Paphos. "And when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem" (verse 13) Paul occupies now the prominent place. As soon as Perga was reached, John the helper, who had gone forth with them from Antioch, deserted them. It was a desertion, for later we find the statement that he departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work (Chap. xv: 38). No reason is given why John turned backward. Was it on account of the dangers or the hard labor? Or was it cowardice? The reason of his return was most likely of a different nature. He was still greatly attached to Jerusalem. His Hebrew name is mentioned only in this chapter and not the

Gentile, the Roman, Mark. Perhaps he could not fully endorse the complete association with the Gentiles and turned back to Jerusalem to be in fellowship with them who were of the circumcision and "zealous for the Law." No matter what was the motive, he did leave them. It was failure on his part and for a long time John Mark had evidently little or no service. He was unprofitable. Blessed is the information we receive from the Second Epistle to Timothy by the Apostle Paul. He requested Mark's presence in Rome. "Take Mark, and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Tim. iv:11). He had been restored, seen his error and judged himself. There can be no question, but John Mark is the writer of the Gospel of Mark, in which the perfect servant of God, the Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed in His unfailing service. What encouragement we should take from this! One who failed in service and was graciously restored, then chosen to write the Gospel of the Servant.

III. The Gospel in Galatia. Paul's address in the synagogue of Antioch.

> But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, *Ye* men *and* brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. (Verses 14–15.)

They reached another Antioch. It was situated in Pisidia. The region into which they now carried the Gospel was also known as Galatia. This district was settled by Gauls, Celtic invaders, who had left about 278 B. C. Southern Europe, and took possession of parts of Asia Minor. In 189 B.C., they were subdued by Rome and the Kingdom of Galatia was formed, which comprised besides Galatia

proper a number of other provinces, including Pisidia. From the Epistle to the Galatians we know that the Apostle Paul preached the Gospel there and founded the different churches. The record of his visit and work is contained in the xiii and xiv chapter, beginning with Antioch in Pisidia. Antioch had, like other cities at that time, a number of Jews, and therefore a synagogue. To this place they went on the Sabbath, and took their place among the other attendants. The order of service as carried on in orthodox synagogues of today is about the same as in the synagogues of the first century. The "Hear Israel!" the so-called "Shema" (a recitation of Deut. vi:4–9), prayers and the reading of a prescribed portion of the Pentateuch, and a similar portion from the Prophets, called the "Haftorah." After the reading of those portions, exhortation was in order. It was at this point that the rulers requested the visiting brethren, of whom they may have heard as teachers, to speak if they had any word of exhortation. The rulers addressed them as Brethren. Gentiles who feared God had likewise access to the synagogue and a number were present on that Sabbath day.

Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it. And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot. And after that he gave *unto them* judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Of this man's seed hath God, according to *his* promise, raised unto Israel a

Saviour, Jesus: When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not *he*. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose. Men *and* brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is this word of salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*. And though they found no cause of death *in him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another *psalm*, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. (Verses 16–41.)

We have before us an intensely interesting record. Whether this is a full report or a condensed report of the address of the Apostle we do not know for certain. We incline to the belief that it is a report in full of what Paul spoke. It corresponds in different ways to Peter's preaching to the Jews, yet it differs from Peter's message in regard to the Gospel. As

we have seen Peter's preaching was addressed to the Jews and he offered forgiveness of sins to them who repent and are baptized. But Paul utters a truth for the first time, which Peter did not declare. He said: "By Him all that *believe* are *justified* from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." It is justification by faith he now preaches. We have in his first recorded utterance the Keynote of the two great Epistles, dictated by the Holy Spirit to the Apostle Paul; the great doctrinal Epistle to the Romans and the controversial Epistle to the Galatians, the defence of his Gospel. The discourse of the Apostle contains three parts. i. A historical retrospect, which forms the introduction of his address. Verses 17–25. ii. The proclamation of the Gospel of the Son of God. Verses 26–40. iii. The solemn warning. Verses 40–41.

He addressed the Jews present as Israel, the covenant Name, and the assembled Gentiles "ye that fear God." He traces rapidly the history of the people Israel, the background of the Gospel he is to preach. God had *chosen* their fathers, *exalted* the people, *delivered* them out of Egypt, He carried them through the wilderness and *suffered** their manners. He furthermore *destroyed* their enemies and *gave* them an inheritance. In Exodus iv:22 it is written, "Israel is my son, my firstborn" and in Hosea xi:1 we read: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." It is this history of Israel as the firstborn son the Apostle sketches rapidly. In the promised land they had judges, a prophet and a King. While he mentions Saul, the Son of Cis, reminding them of the failure involved in his case, he speaks more fully of David as the one whom God raised up, in whom He was pleased, who was to fulfill all His will. At once he mentions Him, who according to the flesh is the seed of David (Romans i:3). The connection with David

*A better rendering is "He nursed them."

is obvious. The three facts mentioned by Paul concerning David find their fulfillment in the promised Saviour, the Son of David. He was raised up by God (verses 23, 30, 33 and 34); God gave him testimony "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and He alone could "fulfill all His will." So Paul speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as the promised One, raised up unto Israel as a Saviour. The preaching of John before this Saviour came, calling all the people of Israel unto repentance is the concluding paragraph of the first part of the Apostle's address.

In the second part of his address he preached the Gospel unto them. He addressed the assembled congregation as men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham; the Gentiles present he also mentioned "whosoever among you feareth God." Then without further delay he uttered the fact of the Gospel, "to you is the word of this salvation sent." One is reminded of the Lord Himself, when in the synagogue of Nazareth He said: "Today is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." How eagerly the gathered company must have listened to what was about to be announced. The cross of Christ, the death of the promised Saviour and the circumstances of His death are immediately proclaimed. There is no salvation apart from the cross of Christ. The word of this salvation he preached unto them centers not in the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ, but in His death on the cross. Like Peter, the Apostle to the Gentiles emphasizes the fact that they that dwelt at Jerusalem and their rulers knew Him not. The reason of their ignorance was because they knew not the voices of the prophets. Ignorance of the written Word led to the rejection of the living Word. It is still so today in Judaism and Christendom. They read every Sabbath the prophecies concerning the Messiah, His rejection and His work, and they fulfilled these predictions in condemning Him. His death on the cross was therefore a fulfillment of Scripture. No cause of death was found in Him. He was

delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. All was fulfilled by them, which was written of Him; all the sufferings of Christ as the Lamb of God were accomplished on the tree.* He was taken down and laid in a sepulchre. His death on the cross was thus briefly pictured by the speaker. And then he announced next to the fact of His death, fully proven by His burial in a sepulchre, that God raised Him from the dead. It is the order Paul follows here which he later writes to the Corinthians. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ *died* for our sins, according to Scriptures; and that He was *buried*, and that He *rose again* the third day according to Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv:3–4). The proofs of resurrection that He was seen many days are also briefly mentioned. Then he declared the good tidings. As an evangelist he announces what had been accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a beautiful and concise statement of Him, who had been raised up in incarnation, and who is by resurrection from the dead the Son of God. The promise made unto the fathers had been gloriously fulfilled. The Second Psalm had predicted this raising up. God sent His Son into the world. On a certain day He entered as the Begotten One into the world. After He had died He became the First Begotten from the dead, destined as such to be the King upon the holy hill of Zion, and to receive the nations for His inheritance. He could not see corruption. This, too, had been predicted in the Psalms (Psalm xvi). The similarity of this first reported evangelistic message of Paul with Peter's is again seen at this point. But he also speaks of Him as the Pious One, the Holy and Gracious One, in whom now are found the faithful mercies of David.

*Peter used the word "tree" and Paul writing to the Galatians said: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is every one that hangeth 'on a tree.'" (Gal. iii:13.)

And then he pressed it all home to their hearts and consciences.

"Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." This is the great climax reached. He did not once mention the word repentance. He has nothing to say of baptism. He did not exhort them to do the best they could or to live under that law, which they had. The Law of Moses could not justify them. The Epistle to the Galatians, most likely read by those in Antioch who heard Paul speak, enlarges upon this fully. Justification from all things is offered now by faith in Jesus Christ. *All that believe are justified of all things* is the blessed message of the Gospel of Grace which Paul preached and which is not after man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. i:11–12).

How simple the message was. All had been done by Christ. He died the Just One for the Unjust; He who knew no sin had been made sin. Forgiveness of sins and a perfect justification from all things is now ready for Jews and Gentiles from the side of a just God, who can be righteously the Justifier of him, who believeth in Jesus. And this simple Gospel, this perfect way of salvation is still to be preached. It is the power of God unto salvation; what a model for the true Gospel address Paul's discourse in the synagogue of the Pisidian Antioch is! Then in the third part, in the concluding words, he gives a solemn warning. This must likewise be attached to every true Gospel testimony. The warning is taken from the Prophet Habakkuk (i:5). It is addressed by the Prophet to "those among the Gentiles." The passage warns against unbelief. The message may be accepted or rejected. The work which God worked in Habakkuk's day was judgment by the Chaldean invasion. It came upon them that believed not. Judgment

would surely come upon them if they believed not and rejected the offer of the Gospel. A few years later Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerning the Jews, "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." The destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the nation was the punitive work God worked for those who believed not. Well does every Gospel preacher if he gives the solemn warning that "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." There is a judgment work coming for all that believe not—"when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

IV. The Gospel rejected by the Jews; they turn to the Gentiles.

And when the Jews were gone* out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And

Correct Reading: "And as they went out they begged that thes words might be spoken to them the next Sabbath."

the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost. (Verses 42–52.)

The offer had been made. Were the Jews in the dispersion to accept it or to oppose the Gospel and reject its gracious invitation? It seems as if a deep impression was created. How else could it have been after hearing such a perfect and able presentation in the power of the Holy Spirit. The request was made that they would speak again a week later. Many Jews and proselytes followed the two messengers. The exhortation of the Apostles that they should continue in the grace of God seems to imply that some had accepted the offer of the Gospel.

But during the week the enemy did his work. The whole city came together the next Sabbath. Large numbers of Gentiles, many of whom had never before entered the synagogue, crowded in to hear the Word. This was too much for the Jews. Jealousy and envy filled their hearts. It came to a riotous opposition. Paul was again the preacher, and not alone did they speak against the truth as preached by him, but they contradicted and blasphemed. What Elymas, the sorcerer, had done as an individual, the type of the blinded Jew, the Jews did in Antioch. Once more Paul with Barnabas pronounces the word of condemnation. The offer of salvation was refused and now the Jews, judging themselves unworthy of eternal life by unbelief, the Apostles said, "we turn to the Gentiles." Scripture is fully on their side in this action, for the prophet had declared, "I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." While the Jews blasphemed and rejected, the Gentiles were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord. As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

"The Jews had judged themselves unworthy of eternal life; the Gentiles, as many as were *disposed* to eternal life, believed. By whom so disposed, is not here declared; nor need the word be in this place further particularized. We know that it is God who worketh in us the will to believe, and that the preparation of the heart is of Him, but to find in this text preordination to life asserted, is to force both the word and the context to a meaning which they do not contain."* All who accept the Gospel by faith are ordained unto eternal life. The good news spread rapidly throughout all Galatia. All this brought out still more fully the jealousy and fierce antagonism of the unbelieving Jews. They used certain women of the higher classes, no doubt the wives of the rulers of the city. These women were devout; they went to the synagogue. Through these women and the chief men of the city a successful persecution of the Apostles was raised and they had to suffer. Nothing is mentioned of suffering here, but Paul mentions it to Timothy (See 2 Tim. iii: 11). They were expelled from that region.

The banished Apostles must have known the Word of the Lord about persecutions and shaking the dust off their feet (Matt. x: 14). They did this and passed on to Iconium. The disciples they left behind were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.

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*Dean Alford, Greek New Testament.

CHAPTER XIV.

The concluding ministry of the first missionary journey of the apostles, their sufferings and testimony, as well as their dangers and return to Antioch, are the events recorded in this chapter.

I. The work in Iconium and the persecution of the Apostles (Verses 1–6).

II. Their testimony in Derbe and Lystra, the healing of the impotent man and what followed (Verses 7–18).

III. The stoning of Paul and further ministries (Verses 19–24).

IV. The Return to Antioch (Verses 25–28).

I. The work in Iconium and the persecution of the Apostles.

> And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them, they were aware of *it*, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about. (Verses 1–6).

Iconium was a Phrygian town, bordering on Lycaonia. Later it became a very influential city, the capital of Lycaonia proper and a center of Christianity in that region. It is also known through an apocryphal book, "The Acts of

Paul and Thecla." The heroine, Thecla, is said to have lived in Iconium and that she was converted by the preaching of Paul.* Once more the Apostles sought out the synagogue to preach the Gospel there. Jews and Greeks were present to listen to their testimony. It is a *far-fetched theory*, which claims that they preached nothing but the kingdom in the different synagogues. The preaching of the Apostles is not reported here, but we may take it for granted that the clear and simple Gospel testimony delivered by the Apostle Paul in the synagogue of Antioch was repeated in Iconium. The message was wonderfully blessed and owned of God. They spake so that not only a few, but a great multitude of Jews and Greeks believed. But the acts of the enemy followed at once. He could not permit such a powerful and successful testimony to go on unhindered. Once more the Elymas character of the unbelieving Jews is brought out. They stirred up the Gentiles, those who had no sympathy with the synagogue, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

But the messengers of the Lord could not be driven from the scene before their testimony was finished. How long they remained is not stated. It was a "long time" they abode there, and with much boldness they spoke the Word of God. And the Lord added His seal to the faithful testimony of His servants. Signs and wonders were done by their hands. By these God demonstrated once more to the unbelieving Jews in the dispersion that Jesus is the Christ. The entire city seems to have been divided. When it came to actual persecutions, and both the unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles made ready to stone them, and the plot became known, they left Iconium and fled to Lystra and Derbe. No

*The whole story is an invention. Tertullian has shown that it is a fictitious story written by a certain Presbyter, who was a great admirer of the Apostle Paul. The Presbyter was disciplined for his writing.

doubt this was the will of the Lord and they followed His guidance. That it was not cowardice or self-protection is seen by the fact that a short time after they returned unto Iconium (Verse 21).

II. Their testimony in Derbe and Lystra, the healing of the impotent man and what followed.

> And there they preached the gospel. And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. *Which* when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard *of*, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We are also men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them. (Verses 7–18.)

The two cities Lystra and Derbe were in Lycaonia proper. The people inhabiting these places were called Barbarians; they heard the Gospel next. No synagogue was located in Lystra, for there were not enough Jews there to form one. However, we know that a pious Jewess had her residence in Lystra. Her name was Eunice. She had been married to a Greek, who had died. Her son was Timotheus, and she lived

with her mother, Lois. From Acts xvi:1–3 we learn that Eunice had believed. The mother was also a believer (2 Tim. i:5). Eunice taught her son the Scriptures. We do not know from the report in our chapter that Paul then came in touch with her, but we fully believe this must have been the case and that the apostles perhaps lodged in her house.

And now another lame man is healed by the power of God. He had been crippled from his mother's womb and had never walked. He heard the Word. Faith came to his heart by hearing, and the Apostle Paul, beholding him, perceived that he had faith to be healed. Then Paul spoke the word and the Lord answered by healing the lame man so that he leaped and walked. The miracle created a great stir among the people, and they cried out in their own language, "the gods are come to us in the likeness of men." The mythological superstitions took hold of them, and they imagined that the two apostles, Barnabas and Paul, were some of their gods who had taken on human form. In Barnabas they imagined to see Jupiter and in Paul, who did the most talking, Mercurius. But the two apostles did not know what all the commotion meant, for they did not understand the Lycaonian language.* The temple of Jupiter or Zeus, as this god is called in the Greek language, was outside of the city. From there the priests brought oxen with garlands, ready to bring sacrifices to the newly-discovered gods. It was then that the apostles heard of it, and rending their clothes, ran among the people to stop their foolish endeavors. These servants of the Lord Jesus Christ did not want honors from men, as if they were some great ones. The people tried to idolize them, but they abhorred these wicked proceedings.

*They did not possess therefore the miraculous gift of languages and understood not what was said. This answers the statements made by those who believe in the restoration of the "gift of tongues," that speaking in tongues is the evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The enemy lurked behind this, no doubt, but the grace of God gave to the apostles the power to act as they did. How much of such idolizing is going on in modern days; how men, professedly the servants of the Lord, seek and love the honor and praise of men, is too evident to be mentioned. Seeking honor from men and having delight in the applause of the "religious world" is a deadly thing, for it dishonors Christ, to whom all honor and glory is due. And how much of all this there is in the present day! It is but the result of not giving the Lord Jesus Christ the pre-eminence.

Powerful were the words which the two men of God addressed to the poor Pagans. They did not preach what they were not capable of understanding. They came right down to their level. They showed them the wickedness of idolatry which puts the creature into the place of the Creator. The message was suited to them and to their needs and paved the way for the Gospel testimony. "We are also men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea and all things that are therein."* Yet even with these burning words they were almost unable to restrain the people from carrying out their purpose.

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*"What is notable, I think, especially for all those engaged in the work of the Lord, is the variety in the character of the apostolic addresses. There was no such stiffness as we are apt to find in our day in the preaching of the gospel. Oh, what monotony! what sameness of routine, no matter who may be addressed! We find in Scripture people dealt with as they were, and there is that kind of an appeal to the conscience which was adapted to their peculiar state. The discourse in the synagogue was founded on the Jewish scriptures, here to these men of Lycaonia there is no allusion to the Old Testament whatever, but a plain reference to what all see and know—the heavens above them and the seasons that God was pleased from old to assign round about them, and that continual supply of the fruits of His natural bounty of which the most callous can scarce be insensible."—W. Kelly.

III. The stoning of Paul and further ministries.

And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and *to* Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. (Verses 19–24.)

Jews from Antioch and Iconium suddenly appeared in Lystra. Not satisfied to make opposition to the apostles and to stir up strife in their own cities, they followed after these men. Word must have reached them of their success in Lystra. They came to stir up the Lycaonians. What evil things they said against the two servants of God may well be imagined. They persuaded the people that they were not gods; they must have branded them as deceivers and worse. The mass of people who were ready to worship Barnabas and Paul changed quickly and stoned Paul. Most likely the fury turned against him because he had been instrumental in healing the crippled man. As the stones fell upon him, must he not have remembered Stephen? And may he not have prayed as Stephen did? And after they thought him dead, they dragged his body out of the city. But the Lord, who had announced such suffering for him, had watched over his servant. He was in His own hands, as every child of God is in His care. The enemy who stood behind the furious mob, as he stood behind the attempt to sacrifice unto them, would have killed Paul. But he could not touch Paul's life, as he was not permitted to touch the life of another servant of God, Job (Job ii: 6). The Lord's

omnipotent hand shielded Paul, and when the disciples stood round about the apparent dead body, he arose and came into the city. This sudden recovery was supernatural. He refers in 2 Cor. xi: 25 to this stoning, "Once I was stoned." Another reference to Lystra we find in his second Epistle to Timothy: "Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; but out of them all *the Lord delivered me*" (2 Tim. iii: 11). Blessed be His name, He is the same Lord still and will deliver them that trust in Him.

The next day finds Paul and Barnabas at Derbe, a small town, some thirty miles from Lystra. Here he preached the Gospel to the entire city and taught many. In chapter xx:4 we have Gaius of Derbe mentioned, who in all probability was a fruit of the apostles' testimony in that city. From Derbe they returned to Lystra without fear, and also revisited Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia. The divine purpose in this was to confirm, to establish the disciples. They had to suffer persecution in these places, and so the apostles exhorted them to continue in the faith and assured them: "that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the Kingdom of God." The Kingdom of God, however, must not be confounded with the kingdom of heaven, which is another term and has another meaning. That they retraced their steps and looked after those who had believed to help them on in the truth and strengthen their faith, is of much importance. Modern evangelism, aiming at big things and large crowds, has lost sight of this. We find in our days but few evangelists who return to the same places to help those who believed and to establish their souls. Besides this the two apostles looked to the proper order for the assemblies. The statement, however, is not that "they ordained them elders in every church" but "they chose them elders." It was not done when the apostles had first labored in these places, for time was necessary to show who was gifted and qualified for the office of an

elder. It is true the apostles looked after this personally, and later Paul commissioned Titus and Timotheus to appoint elders. But the Holy Spirit also has given in the Epistles, for the church throughout the age, the marks of true New Testament eldership. It is the Holy Spirit who calls and fits elders for their work in the assembly, and the assembly, having the Scriptures to show the fitness for the office, must recognize such. Confusion, division and disorder in many assemblies are often the result of having ignored this fact. Those who are gifted for oversight must exercise this gift.

After they had accomplished this important and needful work, commending them also in prayer to the Lord, they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia.

IV. The Return to Antioch.

> And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples. (Verses 25–28.)

No report is given of the result of the preaching at Perga. From there they went to the seaport Attalia, and then they returned to the starting point, Antioch, from where they had been called to do the work, and which they had, through the grace of God, fulfilled. They had been gone for about eighteen months. The church in Antioch was gathered together to hear the wonderful story of God's grace and power. What a blessed time they must have had together when Paul and Barnabas related what God had done! What praise and joyful exclamations must have welled forth from the hearts and lips of God's people as they listened how the Lord had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles! And there Paul and Barnabas abode in blessed fellowship with the disciples.

CHAPTER XV.

A very critical time had now arrived for the church. An important question had to be settled. That Gentiles can be saved and salvation must be extended to the Gentiles had been fully demonstrated. The Apostle of the circumcision, Peter, had been used to preach the Gospel to a company of God-fearing Gentiles. Evangelists had gone to Antioch and the great Gentile center had there been founded. Paul and Barnabas had completed their great missionary journey and numerous assemblies of Gentiles, saved by Grace, were formed. The question of the salvation of Gentiles could no longer be raised. But we remember from the eleventh chapter of this book, that when Peter returned to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him. They objected to Peter going to men uncircumcised and eating with them. But those of the circumcision had not been fully satisfied with the status of the believing Gentiles. What about circumcision in their case? Should they not also keep the Law? In other words, the question of the relation of the believing Gentile to the Law and to circumcision had to be determined.

This question was but the natural outcome of the situation in the beginning of this age. To make this clear we quote from another: "Wherever the Jews went in the Gentile world, their presence gave rise to two conflicting tendencies. On the one hand, the Jew possessed the knowledge of the one true God; and amidst the universal corruption, idolatry and superstition of the ancient world this saving knowledge exercised a powerful attraction. The synagogues of the Jews became the center of a large body of seekers after truth, whether actually circumcised proselytes or simply God-fearing Gentiles. On the other hand, this knowledge

was enshrined in a law, which imposed upon the Jews a number of distinctive customs and observances and these separated them from the rest of mankind and made a real coalescence impossible. Four characteristics in particular struck the Gentiles, the absence of all images or emblems of the deity in Jewish worship, the observance of the Sabbath, abstinence from unclean meat and especially swine's flesh, and circumcision. This last was sufficient in itself to prevent the world from adopting Judaism. But the law of uncleanness caused the Jew on his side to look upon the Gentiles with contempt, as unclean, and put an effectual bar on any real fellowship. The Gentiles in their turn readily paid back Jewish exclusiveness with an ample interest of ridicule and hatred. This double relation to the Gentiles divided the Jews themselves into two schools. On the one side were those who with some consciousness of the brotherhood of common humanity were striving to remove barriers and to present the Jewish faith to the world in its most spiritual and philosophic aspect. Such were the Hellenists of Alexandria. On the other side, the salvation of the Gentiles was inconceivable to the genuine Hebrew, and this was the attitude of mind which prevailed in Judea. There the Hebrews were growing more and more rigid; instead of lowering, they were raising the fence around the law and trying to make the barrier between Jew and Gentile absolutely impassable."*

From this situation it is easily seen what an important question it was which had to be faced. We must likewise remember that the great controversial Epistle, the divinely-inspired defence of the Gospel of the Apostle Paul, the Epistle to the Galatians, was then not written. We shall have to turn to this Epistle in connection with the chapter before us. The interesting account has five parts:

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*R. B. Rackham.

I. The false teachers from Judea; Paul and Barnabas sent to Jerusalem (Verses 1–5).
II. The Council in Jerusalem (Verses 6–21).
III. The result made known (Verses 22–29).
IV. The Consolation brought to Antioch (Verses 30–35).
V. Paul and Barnabas separate (Verses 36–41).

I. The false teachers from Judea; Paul and Barnabas sent to Jerusalem.

> And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and *of* the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses. (Verses 1–5.)

It was a happy scene in Antioch with which the previous chapter closed. But the enemy never leaves God's people undisturbed in their happiness and peace. The disturbing element were certain men, who came from Judea. Their names are not made public, but they were the instruments of Satan. From verse 24 in this chapter it is evident they came from Jerusalem and perhaps some of the Judaizing leaders sent them on this errand. What a message it was they brought! "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved." Here were large numbers of Gentiles who had accepted the Gospel and having believed were saved. Furthermore, they had the gifts in their midst, apostles, evangelists and teachers. The Holy Spirit had

manifested His blessed power again and again in the growing assembly. And now, after all these gracious blessings and enjoyment of salvation, these men appear from Judea and taught them—"except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved." No doubt they cited the fact of the believing Jews in Judea and Jerusalem and that circumcision was a divine institution. They came as teachers professing authority. How great must have been the consternation among these Gentile believers when they heard this message! But Paul and Barnabas detected the subtle work of the enemy. No small dissension and strife arose, with many questionings. Paul then must have already thundered forth his great word in Galatians: "If any man preach another Gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed." The Gospel he preached had nothing to do with the law nor with circumcision. But the question had been introduced and brought discussion into the Antiochian Church; it had to be settled.

It was determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and elders about this question. The second chapter in Galatians must here be considered for it gives additional information on this visit to Jerusalem. "Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation" (Gal. ii: 1–2). From this we learn it was fourteen years after his previous visit to the city of his fathers, that Titus accompanied him, and that he had a revelation from the Lord about this visit to Jerusalem. Perhaps Paul was reluctant to proceed to Jerusalem. His Gospel was not received from nor linked with Jerusalem. Why should he go to Jerusalem in defence of that Gospel? But he tells us in the second chapter of Galatians that his journey to Jerusalem was by revelation. This may have been by some strong intimation given by the

Holy Spirit or by a direct word from the Lord Himself. And Titus, whom he took along was a Greek, a pure Gentile, and as such uncircumcised. The reason must have been to present in Titus a specimen of what the Grace of God and the gifts of the Holy Spirit can do for a Gentile.

The whole assembly had sympathy with the journey. They brought the delegation on their way. The travel to Jerusalem was not in idleness. In Phenice and Samaria they declared everywhere the conversion of the Gentiles, most likely a rehearsal of what God had done on their great missionary journey. Everywhere the brethren rejoiced. From this it is clearly seen that the great majority of the Christians in Phenice and Samaria were in full sympathy with that Gospel which Paul preached, and opposed to the Judaizing teachers.

When they reached Jerusalem the Church received the delegates. Apostles and elders besides the other members of the church were present. In their presence they told out once more what it had pleased God to do through them. In Galatians, Paul writes, "And I communicated unto them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation lest by any means I should run or had run in vain" (Gal. ii:2). This is not in contradiction with the historical account in this chapter. He gave an explanation of that Gospel he had received by revelation to the Apostles and Elders privately. But in the Church gathing they simply spoke of the fact how the Lord had guided them and opened such a wide door among the Gentiles and how many of them had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. A protest from the side of the Judaizing Pharisees was at once raised. These may have been the teachers who went to Antioch, and who most likely followed the deputation from Antioch to Jerusalem. They demanded that it was needful to circumcise them (the Gentiles) and to command them to keep the law of Moses. What happened immediately after

this interruption is learned from Paul's own account in Galatians. Titus must have been present and the Pharisees objected to him as an uncircumcised Gentile. But Paul in the contention opposed them, and that successfully. "But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised" (Gal. ii: 3). Paul calls these Judaizing teachers "false brethren" and speaks of his opposition he made to them. "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage; to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you" (Gal. ii: 4–5). This was followed by a council in which the important question of Salvation without the law was to be considered.

II. The Council in Jerusalem.

And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles,

upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornification, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day. (Verses 6–21.)

That which is written in Galatians ii: 6–10 took place in the private conference which Paul and Barnabas had with the Apostles and not in the council as reported here. James, Cephas and John, the three pillars of the Church in Jerusalem, then gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. The larger council followed afterward. This first reported church council is a most interesting event. How different from the Church councils of the present time, with their political trickeries and machinery, their unscriptural division of God's people into clergy and laity, the making of laws and rules and their voting by ballot!

The Apostles and Elders were present, but also the multitude (verse 12). There was perfect liberty in disputation. It has not pleased the Holy Spirit to give us an account of the debate which was carried on. Peter rose up and delivered the first address to the council. This is the last time his name appears in the Book of Acts. As the Apostle of the circumcision, and used first to give the Gospel to the Gentiles, he was the right person to be heard. To this fact he refers at once. The Holy Spirit had been given to the Gentiles as He had been bestowed upon the believing Jews. After these well-known facts were stated before the multitude, Peter speaks of the law as a yoke which neither the fathers nor they were able to bear. "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." He declares that to force the Gentiles to submit to circumcision and to keep the law of Moses is nothing less than to tempt God. Peter, the acknowledged

Apostle of the circumcision, is used by the Holy Spirit to show the error of the demand of the Judaizing teachers. Gentiles had heard the Gospel, believed the Gospel, and upon that God gave them His greatest gift, next to the unspeakable gift, the Holy Spirit. The law was a yoke for them and their fathers and they could not bear it. As Jews they expected salvation, not by the keeping of the law nor by circumcision, but through grace. The argument was complete. The law and circumcision should not be put upon the Gentiles. The cross of Christ has made a complete end of the law. To go back to the law and mix law with that grace by which we are saved, is an evil thing.

After Peter's address the multitude kept silence. It was the evidence that every heart gave full assent to what Peter had so tersely stated. The Judaizing element seems to have been completely silenced. It was the guidance of the Holy Spirit which brought Barnabas and Paul to their feet. They told once more the interesting story of their labors among the Gentiles and restated what miracles and wonders God had wrought. And after the multitude had listened to this additional testimony of how God in grace had visited the Gentiles, there was another period of silence. What a contrast with the tumult and disorder one sees in modern general church councils, general conferences, and assemblies! In these councils of Christendom everybody tries to be heard and there is a sinful ambition for leadership, which sometimes does not stop short of the most abominable schemes. If we call this gathering in Jerusalem the first church council, then it did not even have a president. The president was the Holy Spirit; He guided and directed the affairs of this important meeting.

How long the silence lasted we do not know. Perhaps many hearts were lifted up in prayer and in praise, thanking God for what He had done. The voice of James broke the silence. Through the Spirit of God he made a most

important declaration. It has rightly been called the divine program. It is significant that in this first great gathering in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit lays down the exact plan of how God works in this present age and what will follow after the special purpose of God in this age is accomplished. And this great truth of the dispensations, so necessary to understand the Word of God, is almost unknown today. What would Christendom be if the divine plan and program as uttered by James were believed? How different the work of the great denominational gatherings, if the dispensational facts so prominent in the whole Bible and so fully stated here, were taken into consideration! Worldliness, departure from the truth, and confusion have come in because this divine program has been forgotten and ignored.

We give an analysis of the words of James. From Simeon's word spoken in their hearing, it was fully demonstrated that God visits the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. This, then, is the starting point:

1. God visits the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name.

It is a remarkable fact that, in the quotation, James (evidently the prominent and venerable leader of the Hebraic party) does not use the Hebrew text, but the Septuagint, that is the Greek version of the Old Testament, which brings out the call of the Gentiles more fully. In doing so he was clearly led by the Holy Spirit.

And this calling out from the Gentiles a people for His name is the special purpose of God in this age. Peter's testimony, followed by that of Barnabas and Paul, had fully demonstrated that God had begun this blessed work. And the Apostle Paul teaches later "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel." Now that people taken out, called by the Gospel, the Gentiles who are fellow-heirs,

are the church. The word "church," in the original, is *ecclesia* —which means an outcalling. This outcalling still goes on and will go on till the church is completed.

There seems to be a tendency in our days among certain Bible teachers to make everything as much as possible Jewish. They tell us that there is nothing about the church in the Gospels nor in the Book of Acts. They want us to believe that the seven church messages in Revelation have nothing to do with this present age, but that these seven churches will come into existence during the great tribulation. Again the Olivet discourse has nothing to do, so they tell us, with our age; it all refers to the Jews. But these fanciful teachers with their speculative theories, which they do not get from the Word of God, but bring there, have even declared that the word of James must be read in another light. It has been stated that the visitation of the Gentiles to take of them a people for His name, as declared by James, has no reference at all to this present age nor to the formation of the church. According to this far-fetched theory that visitation of which James spoke almost 1900 years ago will take place in the future. (!) It is not surprising that some good people who adopt such novel and strange expositions, if they can be called that, should become confused. The visitation of the Gentiles began after Israel had rejected God's offer. Cornelius and his house, as well as those reached by the evangelists (Acts xi: 20), and the multitudes called out by the preaching of Paul and Barnabas are in view here. All those believing Gentiles constituted with believing Jews the one body, the church. This visitation of the Gentiles through the Gospel of Grace still goes on. What then, is next in the divine program?

2. "After this *I will return*." In the Hebrew text of Amos ix: 11–12 these words are not found. Nor does James state that they are written in that passage, which he partially quotes from the Greek translation (Septuagint). He

said, "to this agree the words of the prophets as it is written, after this I will return."

The Lord announces His return to His people in these words, "I will return." This return of the Lord to turn graciously to His people Israel is written not merely in one of the prophets, but in the prophets. They all announce this great coming event. Now, according to the statement of James, the Gentiles must be visited first; a people (the church) is to be taken out of them. After this is accomplished and the full number, which constitutes the church, is called out, the Lord will return. It is not His coming for the saints, as revealed in 1 Thessalonians iv: 16–18, but His visible Return in power and glory, of which the prophets speak.* That during the endtime the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached among the nations (Matthew xxiv:14), a work which will begin after the true church has been removed from the earth, is elsewhere revealed in the Scriptures; but that this work during the great tribulation should be that of which James speaks exclusively is an extremely fanciful conception. The Gentiles had been and were to be visited for the outcalling of a people for His name and *after* this the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will take place.

3. Next we read of what will be the result of the coming of the Lord. "And will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up." This is of course only one of the results of the Return of the Lord. The Kingdom will be established as promised in the Davidic covenant. The divine announcement made to Mary the Virgin concerning our Lord will then be fully accomplished. "The Lord God shall give unto Him

*The Coming of the Lord for His Saints, who are to be raised from the dead, and with the living believers to be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, is nowhere revealed in the prophetic books of the Old Testament.

the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i:32–33). This, likewise, is announced by the prophets that such a restoration of Israel, the Kingdom as a theocracy, is to take place. All the prophets predicted the coming establishment and glory of the Kingdom in connection with the visible manifestation of the Lord out of heaven.

4. "That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." The Gentiles, yea, all of them, will be brought to a knowledge of the Lord after the tabernacle of David has been set up. The Gentiles will seek the Lord after He has come back. There will not be another "outcalling," but the nations will turn to the Lord and the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. This fourth part of the divine program as given through James corresponds with the vision which Isaiah saw: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; *and all nations shall flow unto it*" (Is. ii:2). "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and His rest shall be glorious" (Is. xi:10). "The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come unto thee" (Is. lx:5). "And it shall come to pass . . all flesh shall come to worship before me, saith the Lord" (Is. lxvi:23). And all this wonderful plan God had laid from the beginning of the world.

The important truths contained in James' utterance are the following: "God gives the Gospel to the Gentiles, through the preaching of the Gospel, a people is called out

for His Name. The church is this outcalled people. The Lord Jesus Christ returns after God's purpose in this age has been accomplished. The result of His return will be the setting up of the tabernacle of David, that is, the promised Kingdom. After He has come again the nations of the world will seek the Lord." World-conversion, according to this divine program laid down in the Jerusalem council, cannot take place till the Lord has returned.

James likewise stated that these Gentiles who had turned to God should not be troubled. The burden of the law was not to be laid upon them; nor should they have anything to do with circumcision. Four things he mentioned from which the Gentiles should be requested to abstain: from pollution of idols, from fornication, from things strangled, and from blood. These things were partially connected with idolatry, especially fornication. Immoralities were at the bottom of the worship of different idols. But these regulations were not based upon the law of Moses, but upon the covenant made with Noah and as such binding upon the Gentiles (Genesis ix: 4).

III. The Result made Known.

Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no *such* commandment: it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you* the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no

greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. (Verses 22–29.)

After the important decision had been reached in the Jerusalem council, the result had to be made known to those who were troubled. This was done through a document in the form of a letter, which was addressed to the brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. The whole assembly was of one mind in this matter. Barnabas and Paul, with other chosen men, were commissioned to carry this message to the brethren. The two chosen were Judas, surnamed Barsabas, a Hebrew, and Silas. The latter must have been a Grecian Jew, a Hellenist, for his name, Silvanus, is Latin, and we know that he possessed the Roman citizenship. This we learn from chapter xvi:37. The document reveals the wisdom which is from above, that wisdom of which James speaks later in his Epistle. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" (James iii:17). The letter sent to the Gentile brethren bears these blessed marks. It is a most wonderful document, brief and extremely tactful. Much might have been said in the denunciation of these false teachers, but all this is carefully avoided and only the most essential matter is presented. And yet it is firm and decisive. How different from present day ecclesiastical rulings, letters concerning the question of fellowship, etc., with their bitter party spirit and unchristian rejection of brethren! The Hebrew element could not be offended at what the council had decided upon, though circumcision and law-keeping were mentioned as not necessary to salvation. On the other hand, the two brethren from Antioch, Barnabas and Paul, were praised for their conduct: "they had hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Such a loving acknowledgment must have had a very salutary effect upon the much disturbed Antiochian assembly. All was done by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who indeed had indicated all along that circumcision was not necessary for Gentiles, for He had come upon the uncircumcised; therefore the statement —"it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us."

IV. The Consolation brought to Antioch.

> So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: *which* when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed *them*. And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others also. (Verses 30–35.)

It is a most blessed and happy scene described in these verses. The assembly in Antioch must have been much in prayer while Paul and Barnabas were absent; eagerly they waited for their return. As soon as they had arrived the multitude of Christians came together for a general meeting. The letter then was read and the result was great joy. It was a great consolation to receive such a loving message. But Judas and Silas had been enjoined to tell them "the same things by mouth" (verse 27), that is, orally. They now discharged their commission. They both were prophets, and exhorted the brethren with many words. The gift of a prophet is here described. It is exhortation and speaking for the edification of God's people. Through these exhortations the assembly was confirmed, that is, more fully established. No doubt their chief exhortation must have been "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of

peace." They abode in Antioch for some time and then, perhaps after another assembly gathering, they were permitted to return to the Apostles in Jerusalem in peace, or rather, *with peace.* From Galatians ii:10 we gain the additional information that the three of whom Paul writes as the pillars, James, Cephas, and John, had made a request which was not embodied in the letter read to the assembly. "Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do." Most likely this request was not forgotten and the poor in Jerusalem were generously remembered by the large assembly in Antioch and the money sent to the Apostles.

There is some doubt about the genuineness of verse 34. Most manuscripts omit the statement about Silas. The preceding verses show that both Judas and Silas were let go to return to the Apostles. Silas, however, must have returned to Antioch, for we find him there according to verse 40 of this chapter. The blessed activity of Paul and Barnabas was renewed in Antioch. They taught and preached the Word of the Lord with many others. What liberty they must have then enjoyed and what gracious results the Lord must have given from this ministry! But the controversy was not altogether overcome. Peter some time later visited Antioch, a visit not mentioned in the Book of Acts. We read of it in Galatians ii:11–14. Paul was then likewise present and withstood Peter to the face when he refused to eat with the Gentiles and build again what he had destroyed. Peter's visit must have taken place shortly after the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch.

V. Paul and Barnabas separate.

And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul

thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches. (Verses 36–41.)

The second great journey of the Apostle Paul had an unfortunate beginning. It started with the separation of the two who had so blessedly worked together and whose joined work had so graciously been owned by the Lord. Human failure and shortcoming were at the bottom of it. It is evident from the inspired record, that there was no waiting before the Lord and no dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in connection with this new start. How different from the first journey! *Then* the whole assembly was ministering to the Lord and the Holy Spirit said, "Separate unto me Barnabas and Saul." *Here* prayer is not mentioned, nor does the Holy Spirit indicate a new work for the two messengers and as a result the two are separated, not to fresh service, but from each other. Paul said, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord, and see how they do." His great love for the brethren prompted this action. His heart longed for them, but it was nevertheless his own will and desire, and not according to the mind of the Holy Spirit. The great work the Lord had for His servant was not to go over the same route and in a kind of inspection tour, visiting every place again, but to carry the Gospel into other regions and evangelize new cities and provinces. To go again with Barnabas, from place to place, places already visited, was Paul's plan; the Lord's plan was another. And how much self choosing in service for God there is in our days! How little true waiting on the Lord and dependence on the Holy Spirit! Many servants who

should carry the Gospel into needed fields and teach the Word to those who are destitute of the truth, confine themselves to a small circle of churches and minister exclusively to these. "Let us go again and visit *our brethren*"—but what about the other members of the same body and the many cities where the Gospel is greatly needed? The servant of Christ, whether he is evangelist or teacher, must exercise this gift under the Lord, directed by His Spirit. Paul suggested to another servant, to Barnabas, what he thought he should do. How could he know what the Holy Spirit meant Barnabas to do?

Barnabas was quite ready to fall in line with Paul's suggestion. Nothing is said that they bowed their knees together and asked the Lord first, whether it was His will that they should go again. Soon it became evident that the action was not sanctioned by the Lord. Barnabas had a will of his own, and was determined to take John Mark along. Paul refused this request. He did not care to be associated with one who had failed in his service. A sharp contention followed, and Barnabas and Paul were separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark and sailed away into Cyprus. What their service was is not reported in this book. Such contention and separation of beloved brethren was surely not the work of the Holy Spirit. It was the result of not asking council of the Lord. But God overruled it all in the end and brought good out of this failure, as He only can in His unfathomable grace. It may be possible that another reason was also connected with this separation. Both John Mark and Barnabas may have had leanings toward the Hebrew side in the matter of the keeping of the law; while Paul stood firmly for what he had so earnestly contended for in Jerusalem. That this may have been the case is suggested by Gal. ii:13—"and the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him (Peter); in so much that even *Barnabas was carried away with their dissimula-*

tion." But this break of fellowship in service, the subtle work of the enemy, was not permanent.

Paul mentions Barnabas in 1 Cor. ix:6, and of Mark's restoration and Paul's love for him we read in Col. iv:10 and 2 Tim. iv:11.

Paul then chose Silas. He took the place of Barnabas in this second journey. The assembly fully recognized the choice of Paul and the brethren commended them both to the grace of God. Paul went through Syria and Cilicia first confirming the churches, which does not mean the so-called man-made rite of confirmation, but he taught them more fully, and thus they were confirmed in the truth and established.

CHAPTER XVI.

Before we follow the second missionary journey of the Apostle Paul, it may not be out of place to give a little chronological table of the life of this chosen instrument, beginning with his conversion down to the close of the second journey. This will help in reviewing the remarkable activity of the great apostle to the Gentiles and put before us the events from Chapter ix-xviii in a concise form.

About A. D. 36 Conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Acts ix.

36—39 At Damascus—Preaching in the synagogue. His journey into Arabia. Returns to Damascus—and flees from Damascus.

His **FIRST** visit to Jerusalem; three years after his conversion. Back to Tarsus. Acts ix. 23–26. Gal. i:18.

39—40 Rest of the Jewish Churches. Acts ix. 31. Paul preaches the gospel in Syria and Cilicia. Gal. i:21.

A period of uncertain length.—During this time he probably experienced many of the perils and sufferings which he recounts to the Corinthians. 2 Cor. xi.

40—43 He is brought from Tarsus to Antioch by Barnabas; and remains there a year before the famine. Acts xi:26.

44 Paul's **SECOND** visit to Jerusalem, with the collection. Acts xi. 30.

45 He returns to Antioch. Acts xii:2–5.

Paul's **FIRST** missionary journey with Barnabas to Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra. Returns to Antioch, Derbe.

46—49 Labors a long time in Antioch.

Dissension and disputation about circumcision. Acts xiv., xv:1, 2.

Paul's **THIRD** visit to Jerusalem with Barnabas, fourteen years after his conversion. Gal. ii:1.

50 They attend the council at Jerusalem. Acts xv.
Return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, with Judas and Silas. Acts xv:32–35.
Paul's **SECOND** missionary journey with Silas and Timothy. From Antioch to Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, Troas. Luke joins him. Acts xvi:10.

51 **Entrance of the Gospel into Europe.** Acts xvi:11–13.
Paul visits Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth. Spends a year and six months at Corinth. Acts xviii:11.

52 **First Epistle to the Thessalonians written. Second Epistle to the Thessalonians written.**

53 Paul leaves Corinth and sails to Ephesus. Acts xviii:18, 19.

54 Paul's **FOURTH** visit to Jerusalem at the feast. His return to Antioch.

The second missionary journey of Paul is now before us and the divine record is full of interest. The sixteenth chapter shows the progress of the Gospel from Asia to Europe. We divide this chapter into five parts.

I. In Derbe and Lystra: Timotheus chosen and circumcised by Paul (Verses 1–5).

II. The Holy Spirit forbids the preaching of the Word in Asia (Verses 6–8).

III. The vision of the man of Macedonia and the journey there (Verses 9–12).

IV. The Gospel in Europe. Events in Philippi (Verses 13–40).

I. In Derbe and Lystra: Timotheus chosen and circumcised by Paul.

Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father *was* a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily. (Verses 1–5.)

Derbe and Lystra, familiar to us from the first missionary journey, are visited again. In Lystra, Paul had healed the cripple, and there he must have met the Jewess Eunice, who lived with her mother, Lois, and whose son was Timotheus. Eunice was a believer and so was the grandmother of Timotheus (2 Tim. i:5). He had a bringing up in the Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. iii:15). The young man had an excellent report by the brethren of Lystra and Iconium. The Holy Spirit moved the Apostle to have Timotheus to go forth with him. The Epistles to Timothy shed more light on this. In 1 Tim. i:18 we read: "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou mightest war a good warfare." A better translation of "according to the prophecies which went before thee" is "according to the prophecies which *led the way to thee*." Timothy had been marked out by the Holy Spirit through the gift of prophecy as the proper companion of the Apostle. No mention is made in the record before us of the laying on of hands. However, we read of it in the Epistles to Timothy. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hand of the presbytery" (1 Tim. iv:14). "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (2 Tim. i:6). This laying on of hands by the elders and by

the Apostle Paul must have been done in Lystra. The circumcision of Timotheus is prominently mentioned. Paul circumcised him, and the reason of this act—"because of the Jews which were in those quarters." This action of Paul has been often condemned as an action which was not according to the mind of the Spirit. We do not think such was the case at all. That Paul's act in circumcising Timothy must have produced a stir among the Gentile Christians can easily be imagined. But recently their minds had been agitated about circumcision. The message of the false leaders—"except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved"—was still fresh in their memories. And now Paul himself circumcised one whose father was a Greek. Paul's teaching on circumcision was well known; he was the apostle of the uncircumcision. Did not this action side him with the lawkeepers and the Judaizers? But looked upon in the right way, all these charges of inconsistency and going back to the law fall down. The law has nothing to say about the circumcision of the offspring of mixed marriages. It is well known that, if there was a mixed marriage (*i. e.*, between a Jew and a Gentile), the law would have nothing to say to the offspring. "Legally, the Jewish father could not own his own children born of a Gentile mother, or *vice versa* (see Ezra x). Now Timothy being the offspring of such a marriage, there could be no claim, even if there was license to circumcise him; and Paul condescends out of grace to those who were on lower ground, and stops their mouths most effectually."* His act then was not according to Law, for circumcision in Timothy's case was not commanded but it was done on the ground of grace; he did not want to put a stumbling block into the way of the Jews. 1 Cor. ix:20 gives the fullest reason for this act of the Apostle, "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the

*William Kelly, introduction to Acts.

Jews, to them that are under the law, not being myself under the law (Rev. Version), that I might gain them that are under the law." We see then the apostolic band, Paul, Silas and Timothy, going through the different cities making known the decrees of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, that is, what had been agreed upon concerning the relation of believing Gentiles to the law. How needful this was for these Galatian churches! These Galatians were by nature fickle-minded and unstable. When Paul was with them they were ready to pluck out their eyes and give them to the apostle (Gal. iv:15); some time later they were only too ready to listen to the Judaizing teachers and Paul had to write them: "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel" (Gal. i:6). The effect of the ministry of the apostle and the declaration of the decision of the Jerusalem council resulted in the strengthening of the churches and in an increased membership.

II. The Holy Spirit forbids the preaching of the Word in Asia.

> Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. (Verses 6–8.)

They travel on throughout Phrygia and Galatia. Though there is no record given of work done here, it does not mean that they were idle and had no testimony for the multitudes. But suddenly their plans of evangelization were halted by the voice of the Holy Spirit. He forbade them to preach the Word in Asia. Their intention was to reach now the large province of Asia* with its flourishing cities. But the

*At that time a large territory of Asia Minor along the Aegean Sea was called "Asia."

Holy Spirit entered a protest against this plan. He did not want to have the Word preached *at that time* in Asia. Later Paul spent three years in the capital of the province, in Ephesus, and all Asia heard the Word. Then they reached the northern part of the province, Mysia; obedient to the voice of the Holy Spirit, they did not speak the Word. They then expected to reach Bithynia, which borders the Black Sea, but the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not. He would not let them go there. Bithynia heard the Word at another time, perhaps through Peter, for his first Epistle is addressed to the strangers throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and *Bithynia.* Christianity became so strong in that province at the beginning of the second century that idol worship was seriously affected.* But the Holy Spirit had His own time and ways for giving the Gospel to these provinces. This shows clearly that the Holy Spirit must guide and direct in service. How He arrested the messengers and suffered them not to proceed is not stated. They followed His guidance obediently. How necessary it is for the servant of Christ, be he an evangelist or a teacher, to depend on the Holy Spirit for a direction! Waiting on the Lord and then to go forth guided by His Spirit is the true way of a successful ministry. He must point out the way and the places and the time when and where the precious Word is to be spoken. Such humble reliance upon the direction of the Holy Spirit is but little known in our days. The great movements of our times seem to place more stress on organization, widespread advertising methods and financial support, than on the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The servants of the Lord Jesus Christ ministering the Gospel and the Word in the end of this present evil age need the guidance of the Holy Spirit as much as the apostle in the beginning of the

*From a letter of the Roman governor Pliny.

age. And the Holy Spirit is today the same as He was then, when He suffered them not to minister in Asia and in Bithynia. We also call attention to the true rendering "the Spirit *of Jesus* suffered them not." The blessed Lord walked on earth in the power of the Spirit and now the same Spirit who led Him while on earth, leads and guides his own into service.

In this action of the Holy Spirit He assumed once more His authority, which, as we saw, was not fully recognized in the beginning of the second missionary journey, as He was recognized when Paul went forth the first time. He had to be held back from going in self-choosing to places which were not then to be visited. Thus kept back from ministry in Bithynia they turned towards the seacoast and came to Troas. This seaport was located opposite the European Continent and Macedonia was the nearest province. Not permitted to preach in Asia, held back from ministry in Bithynia, a double course was open to the apostle, either to go back to Antioch or to cross over to Europe.

III. The vision of the man of Macedonia, the journey there.

> And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next *day* to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. (Verses 9–12.)

The Lord, who had kept them back by His Spirit from going into the provinces, which were not to be reached at that time, now makes His will known where they were to

go. All the uncertainty and perplexity which had rested upon the little company is now to be lifted. That there was deep soul exercise and continued prayer we may well surmise. They cast themselves completely on the Lord and He now directs them. Paul had a vision during that night. He beheld a man from Macedonia, whom he must have recognized as such by his dress or some other way and he prayed him—"Come over into Macedonia and help us." And after he had seen the vision they immediately decided to cross over into Macedonia. They had gathered first by spiritual intelligence that the meaning of the vision was that the Lord called them to preach the Gospel in that land. All this is full of encouragement to God's servant. If we only learn to wait and trust in Him, He will direct our steps. However, the vision Paul had must not be taken as the common mode of guidance, nor as something which was to be repeated. We are to walk in faith and not by sight, and faith does not want sight, nor expects visions to know the will of the Lord. The prophecy of Joel in which dreams and visions are mentioned does not concern the present age at all. The people who claim to have visions and dreams now, as a result of a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, are generally, if not always the subjects of delusion. When a Christian is fully obedient to the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of God fills him, he does not want and does not need visions and dreams. The vision Paul had was an extraordinary event. It was unexpected and unasked for.

According to the so-called *Bezan* text* they found in the harbor a ship sailing the next morning. This may have been the case, for the text shows that there was no delay in their departure. Whenever the Lord calls to a service He also opens the way providentially. The tenth verse is

*A Greek MS. of the Gospels and Acts Written in the VI Century, which came into possession of Beza the scholar and reformer. It has many variations from the ordinary text.

interesting for another reason. The pronoun is now changed from "they" to "we." From this we learn that Luke, the beloved physician and the chosen instrument to write this historical book, joined the party. He does not mention his name at all, but keeps himself completely in the background. May we profit by this beautiful example of humility! From Samothracia they came to Neapolis and from thence to Philippi.

Philippi, the first European city in which the Gospel of the Son of God was preached, is described as the chief city of that part of Macedonia and a colony (verse 12). This city had been founded by Philip of Macedon, to keep the wild Thracians in check, which were the neighbors of the Macedonians. In 42 B.C., a decisive battle was fought during the Roman civil wars, and Philippi was made a Roman colony and settled with soldiers. It was mostly inhabited by Roman citizens. It was a city filled with idolatry. The presence of Lydia of Thyatira gives the hint that a trade in purple must have existed there. No synagogue was located in the city. The events which transpired here are given in detail and occupy the rest of this chapter.

IV. The Gospel in Europe. Events in Philippi The first incident recorded is the conversion of Lydia, a seller of purple, of the City of Thyatira.

> And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us:* whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us. (Verses 13–15.)

They may have arrived quite early in the week and waited for the sabbath. But there was no synagogue in the city,

since the Apostle and his companions to find the few Jews in that city went out of the city by the riverside, where prayer was wont to be made. The river was the small stream Gangites. It was the custom of the Jews to go to the riverside or to the sea for prayer, most likely on account of the different washings commanded by the law. Of this we read already in Ezra (viii:15, 21). Many other sources speak of this custom. The Apostle and his associates found a company of women gathered there. We wonder if Paul looked for the man whom he had seen in his vision. But there was no man present; only a company of women. But these messengers were not discouraged by the humble audience, the first which ever gathered in Europe to hear the Gospel. They did not despise the small things but were ready to speak to the few women who had come together for prayer. Paul spoke to them. His words are not given, but he had one theme, the Gospel of Grace, and of this and the Lord Jesus Christ, His death on the cross and His resurrection he assuredly spoke. Among the women was Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which was situated in the province Asia, where the door had been closed. Lydia was a worshipper of God. She had turned to the true God and had dropped idolatry. She was a pious soul earnestly seeking after the truth; this piety was seen in her seeking out on the sabbath those who worship the Lord. She was, like Cornelius, converted, but had no knowledge of salvation, because she knew nothing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then the Lord opened the heart of Lydia. A blessed word this is. He Himself must open the doors of the hearts of the hearers. Human hands could not do this; the power belongs to Him alone, unless the Lord goes before and prepares the hearts for the reception of the truth and removes the bars, all efforts are in vain. May those who go forth to preach the Gospel look to the Lord to open the hearts

of the hearers, and when precious souls accept the truth, let us give the praise and the glory to Him and not to the evangelists. Alas! how much work is being done in which the Lord has no share, in which He and His Spirit is dishonored. There is also a special significance in the fact that Lydia was from Thyatira. It is more than possible that she carried the Gospel to her native city in Asia. An assembly was there and from the words of our Lord in the message to Thyatira (Rev. ii:18–29) we learn that another woman corrupted Christianity there. "I have this against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" (Rev. ii:20). Such a woman had sprung up in Thyatira, the opposite from the gentle Lydia with her beautiful experience and Christian character. Prophetically, Jezebel in Thyatira stands for Rome, "the woman clothed in purple and scarlet."

The baptism of herself and her household followed immediately, and having had her heart opened, she now opened her house to Paul and his companions. She besought them and, evidently a rich woman, she showed great humility—"if ye judge me to be faithful to the Lord." And they abode in her house. She fully identified herself with the messengers of the Lord, and must have shown them great kindness. Her house became the home of Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke, and the gathering place of the assembly in Philippi (verse 40). No doubt later in sending fellowship from Philippi to the Apostle (Phil. iv:14–16) she had a large share in this. Thus the blessed fruits of the Spirit were abundantly revealed.

> And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high

God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. (Verses 16–18.)

The second event in Philippi is the deliverance of the damsel, possessed with the spirit of Python. The enemy is now coming to the front once more. He could not leave the entrance of Europe by the Gospel unchallenged and so he begins his work. He comes in the garb of an angel of light and appears as a friend of the servants of Christ, seemingly ready to help the cause of the Apostle. A damsel, most likely a slave girl, had a spirit of divination, or, as the word is in the original, of Python. Python was the name, supposedly, of a great dragon at Delphi, slain by Apollo. She had masters over her and brought them much gain by her soothsaying. She was what is called to-day, a medium, possessed by a demon. Such the spiritualistic mediums are, if they are not outright frauds, who deceive their dupes by clever tricks. And it is a startling and solemn fact that some of the leading educators, college professors, literary men and even so-called clergymen are seeking after these demon-possessed girls and women and pay them well for their damnable practices. Of course this goes under the name of "scientific investigation" or "psychical research."

The girl here was possessed by a spirit. This was fully recognized by the people of Philippi as well as by the Apostle. "All attempts to explain away such a narrative as this by the subterfuges of Rationalism is more than ever futile.*" Another commentary on Acts suggests that the damsel was probably a ventriloquist! Through this cunning demon Satan tried to hinder the work by assuming a friendly relation towards the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Dean Alford: Greek Testament.

She followed Paul and his three helpers and announced before them the fact that they are the servants of the most high God and that they show the way of salvation. This she did many days. That demon spoke the truth, though he could not confess Christ as Lord and Saviour. Instead of calling them deceivers and warning against the Gospel they brought, this evil spirit *applauded* them. Instead of assailing the work in an open fashion, he appears as if he would help it along and that by flattery. His attempt was to support outwardly the work of the Gospel by this loud-mouthed advertising and then to hurt it at the same time. But the Gospel does not need such support. Nor does it need the support of the world, behind which Satan stands as ruler, prince and god. The support and applause of the world does not further the Gospel, but it is the most deceptive hindrance of it Satan has ever invented. And how much of all this we see at the present time! How often evangelistic movements with their great schemes seek the alliance and assistance of the daily press, which is generally anti-christian, to help along the work of the Gospel by giving to it prominence in the eyes of the world; and other facts we leave unmentioned. The world is always the world and friendship with it must mean enmity to God. Such was the attempt of Satan here to ally himself with the servants of Christ and then to spoil them. How well he has succeeded in Christendom of to-day!

But Paul would not accept this testimony. He ignored the attempt at first and goes on his way without paying any attention to the wild cries of the damsel. At last he was grieved and then in the blessed name of the Lord Jesus Christ he commanded the demon to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

> And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the marketplace unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These

men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them.* And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. (Verses 19–24.)

The enemy having failed in his wily attempt now shows himself in his true character. The masters of the damsel who was delivered from the evil spirit, were just as much in Satan's power as the demon-possessed girl. Through these men Satan now opposes the progress of the Gospel by force. Paul and Silas are rushed into the marketplace before the magistrates.

The accusation was that they taught an unlawful religion. Paul's preachings of course aimed at the idol worship of Rome and of Augustus. In this at least the accusation was true. But the offence of the two men appeared in a worse light, when it was announced that both Paul and Silas were Romans. To proclaim another religion was paramount with treason. Of course the motives presented before the judges were false and a mere pretence. But Satan succeeded in stirring up the multitudes. The mass of people rose up against them. The Magistrates also joined in and stripped the two messengers of the Lord of their clothes. This was considered a great shame and insult and they must have felt it keenly. Paul refers to it in his epistle to the Thessalonians—"But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God with much contention" (1 Thess. ii:2). Then in that condition they were severely whipped, many stripes were laid on them. This is one of the beatings with rods to which Paul refers in 2 Cor. xi:25—"Thrice was I beaten with rods." The shame

and severe pain from this beating must have been almost unbearable. Then they were cast into the prison and the jailer was especially charged to keep them safely. This individual felt his responsibility and to make them doubly secure he put their feet into the stocks. And thus stripped of the clothes, with lacerated and bleeding backs, their feet were encased in the cruel stocks. The cruelty of man producing such suffering was the work of the enemy. They suffered in patience and the Holy Spirit filling them gave them strength to suffer unjustly.

> And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. (Verses 25–28.)

Evening comes on and when midnight is reached strange sounds are heard in the dungeon. Curses and vile language are the familiar tones with weeping and gnashing of teeth, which sounded through these miserable Roman prisons. But now the voice of singing is heard. Prayer and Praise come from the cell of the two imprisoned evangelists. At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God. The prisoners heard them. No doubt the prayer and praise was fully on the line of the blessed Gospel; they must have praised God for the Lord Jesus, that He suffered for their sins and had saved them. They knew the Lord was with them and the joy of the Lord burst forth in these songs in the night. "He giveth songs in the night." How this was verified in their case and what a testimony it was. Sufferings like theirs we know no longer, and alas! if some suffering is the lot of some Chris-

tians, or a little tribulation comes, there is often murmuring and doubting instead of rejoicing and praising the Lord.

And *suddenly* there came an answer. The Lord answered the prayers of His suffering servants by an earthquake. He intervened in their behalf in an extraordinary manner. Rationalism has tried either to make it appear as if this was a coincidence or ignored the earthquake completely.* God shook the whole place when they were still praising Him. The doors were opened, the bonds of the prisoners were loosed, but the prison itself did not fall. This may be explained by the fact that this prison, like other Roman prisons consisted in excavations in a rocky hillside. The prisoners were chained to the walls and the cave cells were shut by wooden doors with heavy bolts. These burst open and the fetters of the prisoners dropped to the ground. The Lord set the prisoners free. But how many dungeons there have been since then with their uncountable victims with tortured limbs, parched tongues and feverish brow, prisoners who, too, like Paul and Silas, prayed and praised. But no answer came to deliver them. No earthquake opened the doors; they died the death of martyrs—and heaven was silent to their pleas: After God's Revelation is completed the heavens are silent, and God expects man to believe His Word. A day is coming when once more there will be intervention from above in the affairs of this world.

The jailer was awakened by the shock and was ready to kill himself, seeing that his prisoners had been liberated, for he was responsible, according to the Roman law, with his life for the prisoners. But Paul's loud cry—"Do thyself no harm; for we are all here" kept him from piercing him-

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*Renan in his "Apostle Paul" does not even mention the earthquake.

self with his own sword. Satan would have rushed the jailer into eternity by suicide; but God had something else for the poor Roman heathen.

> Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house of* Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed. (Verses 29–40.)

The sudden event, the fact that the prisoners had not escaped, the assurance from Paul that they were all there, and perhaps the singing and the prayers of the Apostles, which he may have heard, all carried conviction to his soul. We see him at the Apostle's feet a trophy of God's Grace, a witness to the power of God and an evidence that the wrath of the enemy must praise Him. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" was the all important question which concerns him now more than the few prisoners or even his own physical life. The Grace of God had changed the poor jailer into a thoroughly awakened soul. The answer to the anxious soul is not slow in coming, "Be-

lieve on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." And upon this they spake unto him the Word of God, the story of Christ, the blessed Gospel of trusting on Him who died on the cross. Only believing, nothing to do, for God had done it all in His own Son. This is the Gospel of Grace, that a free and full salvation is given to the sinner in simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the same way of salvation to-day as it was then. Every one who denies and rejects it has no hope and is a lost soul.*

And the promise was not only to the jailer, but also to his house. This is a blessed truth alas! too often overlooked by Christian parents or ignored through false teaching. The promise of course is conditional. No one can be saved except by personal faith in a personal Saviour. The Christian home stands for much according to New Testament. The husband is to love his wife even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, so that the husband represents Christ. The wife is to submit under the husband, as the church is subject unto the Lord, and the children are to obey the parents in the Lord (Ephes. v:22–33; vi:1). The exhortation is given to the fathers, "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (vi:4). We can bring our children to the Lord and as we bring them up according to the divine exhortation we have full assurance that they shall be saved.

Not alone did the jailer hear the Word of the Lord, but also all that were in his house, which no doubt meant his household, wife and children and all who belonged to him.

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*And how God's way of salvation *is* rejected in these days is frightful. Salvation by character, a bloodless Gospel is the present day substitute. Thus a certain preacher taught some months ago in a popular monthly "Salvation is not an instantaneous act whereby the sinner is assured of deliverance from hell and enjoyment of heaven, but a lifelong process." Such a statement sweeps the entire Gospel away.

And after he had washed their stripes he and all his were baptized straightway. There was no delay with water baptism.

In washing their stripes and welcoming Paul and Silas to his home, setting meat before them, the jailer showed the works which follow faith. And faith had brought joy to his heart. He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

The morning brought an order from the magistrates that these men should be dismissed. But Paul now demands to be heard. These magistrates had dealt in an unjust manner and they had to acknowledge their fault as well as the rights of the Gospel. He demanded that they come themselves and fetch them out of prison, inasmuch as they had beaten them uncondemned, and the men whom they had treated in this way were Romans. When the magistrates heard the message they feared. According to Cicero, to bind a Roman was a crime, to scourge him a scandal, to kill him a homicide. It was one of the most valued privileges of Roman citizenship, this immunity from corporal punishment. The cry *civis Romanus sum* (I am a Roman citizen) brought even among Barbarians help and safety. They came therefore out to the prison and besought them, desiring that they should depart out of the city. In this action they acknowledged the wrong they had done. But they were not in a hurry to leave. They first entered the house of Lydia and saw the brethren, whom they comforted. Then they departed. Luke stayed behind in Philippi. The blessed fruit of the ministry of Paul and Silas formed the beginning of the first assembly in Europe, to which later from Rome the Apostle addressed that precious Epistle of Christian life and experience.

CHAPTER XVII.

Three cities in which the Gospel is next preached are before us in this chapter. But there is a marked difference between these three places. In Thessalonica there was much hostility, the result of the success of the Gospel. In Berea a more noble class of Jews were found. Their nobility consisted in submission to the Scriptures, the oracles of God, and in a ready mind. There was a still greater blessing among the Jews and the Gentiles. In Athens the Apostle Paul met idolatry, indifference and ridicule.

I. The Gospel in Thessalonica (Verses 1–9).
II. The Gospel in Berea (Verses 10–14).
III. Paul in Athens (Verses 15–34).

I. The Gospel in Thessalonica.

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went into the room, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, *is* Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus. And they

troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the others, they let them go. (Verses 1–9.)

No record is given of work done on the way to Thessalonica. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the blessed messengers of the cross made for the influential capital of the province, knowing that they would find a goodly number of Jews there and a synagogue where they could preach. Thessalonica was one of the most influential cities in those days. Even to-day it is a city of almost 100,000 inhabitants and its ancient name is still to be traced in its present one, that is, Saloniki, the second largest city in European Turkey. It has an excellent location on the Aegean Sea and by a direct road, the Egnatian way, had communication with the capital of the Roman Empire. It was one of the free cities of the Empire and had its own constitution. This was democratic, its authority resting with the *Demos*, the people. The chief magistrates were called *Politarchs*, as we would call them now, city fathers or rulers. This word is used by Luke in verses 6 and 8. As it is not found at all in classical literature, certain Bible critics accused the writer of the Book of Acts of inaccuracy and impeached in this way the inspiration of the book. But like all other criticism, this charge has come back upon the critics. There is in the British Museum to-day a stone block in which the word "Politarch" is chiselled. The stone was taken from a triumphal arch, which stood in Thessalonica in the first century and which was preserved till 1867, when it was destroyed. The one stone block containing an inscription was transferred to the famous British Museum. The inscription is translated as follows: "The *Politarchs* being Sopater, son of Cleopatra, and Lucius Pontius Secundus, Aulus Arius Sabinus, Demetrius son of Faustus, Demetrius son of Nicopolis, Foilus son of Parmenio also called Meniscus, Caius Agilleius Potitus." It is intensely inter-

esting to find that some of these names are mentioned in Acts xx:4.

In this city the missionaries entered, and Paul at once sought out the synagogue. This was his custom. For three Sabbath days, but more correctly as the margin has it, weeks, he ministered the Word to the Jews. And now we have before us a very interesting record. "He reasoned with them out of (from) the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must have needs suffered and risen again from the dead: and that this Jesus (he said) whom I preach unto you is Christ."

From this we may learn important lessons. His mode of approaching the Jews here as well as elsewhere was not in a regular discourse in the form of a sermon or a lecture. It was just a converse, a discussion permitting questions and giving answers. It was teaching in a conversational way and the Scriptures were the foundation of it. Of course, the Old Testament is meant by the name Scriptures, for the New Testament Scriptures were not yet in existence. Such reasonings suited the Jewish mind well. It is still the best way in which to approach the Jew with the Gospel. The method which Paul followed is by far the best. He opened the Scriptures. The Law, the Prophets and the Writings* were opened by him in reference to the Messiah, whom God had promised to them. He quoted the great Messianic prophecies. He must have turned to the Psalms and opened that blessed book in its many predictions. No doubt the different types as given in the tabernacle and its worship, the sacrifices and offerings, the Passover and deliverance out of Egypt, the brazen serpent and other events were rehearsed by him. But the argument and reasoning was altogether

* The Old Testament in Hebrew is divided into three parts. *Thora*, the Law; *Nevijm*, the Prophets; *Kethuvim*, the Writings—such as Proverbs, Psalms, Job, etc.

on the Person of the Messiah. He showed that the Scriptures teach that the promised Christ had to suffer and to die and rise again from the dead. Then after he had established this fact, independent of who that promised Messiah is, he pressed home another fact, namely, that Jesus whom he preached is that Christ. How powerful this reasoning must have been and under the Holy Spirit; it brought conviction to their hearts. Some believed. But the greater success was among the devout Greeks, such as had abandoned idolatry, who were attendants at the synagogue. A great multitude with many of the chief women believed. But many of these Greeks, as we learn from the Epistle to the Thessalonians, were converted directly from idolatry, "they turned to God from idols" (1 Thess. i:9).

As servants the Apostle and his companions had perfect liberty to enter these synagogues to deliver the message. This liberty still belongs to all who are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. The servants of Christ have perfect freedom to go wherever the Lord opens a door to preach the Gospel.*

Another interesting fact is learned concerning the activity of the apostle in Thessalonica from the two Epistles, which he addressed some time after to the Thessalonians. These were the first Epistles Paul wrote. From these we learn that the Apostle not only preached the Gospel, but also taught the Thessalonian believers prophetic Truths and emphasized the Second Coming of Christ and the events connected with it. In the Second Epistle he reminds them of his oral teaching. "Remember ye not that when I was

*We emphasize this because there are some ultra separationists who form little sects, claiming to be *the* church. They forbid their preachers and teachers to enter church buildings of the different denominations and have even put some out of their fellowship because they preach the Gospel in a church.

yet with you I told you these things" (2 Thess. ii:5). He told them that they were to wait for His Son from heaven (1 Thess. i:10); that there would be the falling away first and the man of sin be revealed before the day of the Lord could come (2 Thess. ii:3–7) as well as other truths. He did therefore not think, as it is said so often in our days, that dispensational truths were too deep for these new converts and babes in Christ. Nothing in God's Word is too deep for those who are born again and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This apostolic method is absolutely necessary to open up the Truth of God and lead newborn saints into it. One of the reasons of present day conditions among those who are no doubt saved, is the lack of dispensational teachings, which the Apostle Paul had so closely linked with the preaching of the Gospel in Thessalonica.

But the enemy was soon aroused in the city. Once more the acts of the enemy through the unbelieving Jews are recorded. He resorts to the same tactics as at Philippi to stir up the mob of the city. The rabble stormed the house of Jason, where the Apostle and Silas lodged. Their intention was to drag the two before the people. Failing to find these, they drew Jason and some other brethren before the Politarchs. Then the usual tumult ensued and the accusation was shouted out—"These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason has received, and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus." The enemy gave a testimony in this accusation to the power and influence of Christianity. The accusation that they opposed Caesar's decrees and claiming that another is King, namely Jesus, must have sprung from the fact that the dispensational teaching Paul gave had reached the people in a distorted way. Persecution set in, and from the Epistles to the Thessalonians we learn that the church

there had much tribulation. So severe became the troubles that the Thessalonians were greatly disturbed when false teachers spread the report that they were facing the great tribulation. To set their minds at rest on this question the apostle wrote his second Epistle. The rulers here took security of Jason and the others and then let them go.

II. The Gospel in Berea.

> And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. (Verses 10–14).

Paul and Silas were immediately sent away by night. What had become of Timothy? He is not at all mentioned in connection with this visit to Thessalonica nor do we hear anything from him since he joined Paul and Silas at Lystra. However from this we must not conclude that he had left them. There is sufficient evidence that he was with them in Thessalonica. Both Epistles to the Thessalonians are from Paul and Sylvanus and Timotheus (1 Thess. i:1; 2 Thess. ii:1). This is conclusive evidence that he was with Paul and Silas. (Silas is the same as Silvanus.) From these Epistles is also gained the information that Paul and most likely also his companions worked with their own hands (1 Thess. ii:9; 2 Thess. iii:8). And now we find them in the City of Berea, some 40 miles from Thessalonica. This city had a magnificent situation at the foot of a mountain range. It

is still a good sized city, known by the name of Verna. As soon as they arrived in the city, they went to the synagogue and here they found evidently prepared ground. The Jews they found are described as "more noble than those in Thessalonica." The word noble does not mean, as some have said, a kind of aristocracy, but it consisted in a ready mind to receive and test by the Scriptures what the messengers of the Lord had to say. They searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. They were anxious to know the truth and in searching the Word they compared Scripture with Scripture. Alas! How little of this readiness of mind and searching the Scriptures one finds among the modern Jews. Many have rejected their own Scriptures and the orthodox Jews are sadly ignorant of the oracles of God, while the Talmudical sayings, the oral traditions of the elders and the paraphrases have worked untold mischief. Only when the judicial blindness which rests upon them will be removed, the veil which is upon their hearts (2 Cor. iii:13–15) will they see Him of whom Moses and the Prophets spake. But the neglect of the Bible is as marked, if not greater, in nominal Christendom. May we search the Scriptures daily.

Therefore, because they had a ready mind and searched the Scriptures, many believed. And to the Berean assembly there were also added Gentiles—"of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few."

Satan, however, knows no rest. When an effectual door is opened, then the adversaries begin. News of Paul and Silas preaching in Berea reached Thessalonica and Satan brought his willing instruments, the unbelieving Jews, to Berea to stir up the people. It was thought best by the brethren, no doubt after prayer and direction from the Lord, to send Paul away. Silas and Timothy remained there.

III. Paul in Athens.

And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed. Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, *is*. For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians, and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.) (Verses 15–21.)

The exact route which Paul took is uncertain. Some of the noble brethren of Berea conducted him, showing thereby their courtesy as well as love for the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. When they parted the Apostle sent through them a message to Silas and Timotheus to come to him with all speed. And now we behold our great Apostle in the wonderful city of Athens, the capital of Greece. Well has one said: "Paul at Athens, Paul the Jew of Tarsus in the city of Pericles and Demosthenes, of Sophocles and Euripides, of Socrates and Plato—that is a situation to which our pen cannot attempt to do justice. Nor is it less difficult adequately to estimate the place of Athens in the Roman Empire. For at this date Athens was still the intellectual and artistic capital of the world. It was also a religious capital, for it was the stronghold of the Greek mythology, which was generally accepted as the most authentic account of the gods and their history."

What a great city it must have been! What splen-

dour in art and architecture the eyes of the apostle must jave beheld! Here the great masterpieces of the greatest masters in architecture and sculpture were to be seen. And then the memories of the past and the great philosophical leaders and their different schools.

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle had moved and taught in this city and the proud Athenians had erected upon their philosophies different schools. It was furthermore a great religious city, full of idols. Xenophon said of Athens: "The whole of it is one great altar, one sacrifice and votive offering to the gods." One artist tried to outdo the other with filling streets and temples with idol statues. But at the same time this great city was on the road to degeneracy. The Athenians lived on the glories of the past, both in art and philosophy. Of this verse 21 bears a striking witness.

Paul in walking through the streets of the city and seeing it wholly given to idolatry was very much stirred in him; he was provoked. He did not halt to examine the temples and great masterworks. Behind the much praised masterpieces he beheld the corruption and wickedness of the human heart.

Not alone was his own spirit provoked in him, but the Holy Spirit stirred him to witness against it. In the synagogues, first of all, he disputed with the Jews and the devout persons, Greeks who had turned away from idols, and in the market daily, he spoke with those that met him. The market was the *Agora*, an open square in the heart of the city. On its sides stood the public buildings what we would call City Hall, courthouses and the temples of different gods. Here also numerous shops were found, and, like in our country towns it was the place of buying and selling, for the people from the country came in with their wares. When business hours were over then the gossipers began. It was the place where new opinions

were expounded, where philosophers and traveling orators found a ready audience. From classical literature we learn that Socrates 450 years before moved in this very place and spoke to individuals and by severe questionings tried to destroy their self confidence and explain his philosophy. But in Paul a greater than Socrates was moving around the Agora, questioning and reasoning with all who would listen. Soon he came across some Epicureans and Stoics. The Epicureans were Materialists. They believed in a certain sense in gods, but held in their belief something like the atomic theory of present day science. They denied a life after death. The Stoics held a belief in a supreme being. They believed that in the Universe there existed an omnipresent spirit and of this spirit the human spirit was a part. The modern Pantheism was their creed. Yet they were religious. But they were extremely self-righteous and proud. The Stoics were much like the Pharisees, while the Epicureans represent the Sadducees of Judaism. With some of these philosophers the Apostle met. As they listened to him they termed him a babbler.* Others were more serious and charged him with being a setter forth of strange gods. For this very thing Socrates had been put to death. But we are not left in ignorance of what Paul preached. He knew but one theme, Jesus and the resurrection.

So one day they took hold on him and brought him unto Areopagus. The Areopagus was a court corresponding to the Roman Senate. Here he had a representative audience of philosophers, leading citizens and a large number of the gossipers, the folks who spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing. Here was their opportunity. Standing before the Athenian

*The Greek word is *Spermalogos*, translated, a seed picker. It was a slang word used to describe the people who frequented the Agora and picked up, like birds, a little here and there.

Court Areopagus he is told in a polite way to defend himself of the accusation made against him. "May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know therefore what those things mean."

> Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and said, *Ye* men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which *was* Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

The authorized version saying that he stood in the midst of Mars' hill is incorrect, it should be Areopagus. The address of the great apostle is one of unusual tact and wisdom. If he became to the Jews as a Jew, here he becomes to the Grecian philosophers as a philosopher. He

makes use of both the Epicureal and Stoic philosophy as far as he can and avoids as much as possible what might stumble them. He starts with the belief in God as the omnipresent and immanent Creator, the Ruler and Keeper of the Universe. This he could back up by quotations from their own poets. After this ground work he speaks of judgment to come, and introduced Him who is the Judge, and the fact of His resurrection.

Let us examine this discourse in its different parts. It has three parts.

1. **The Introduction** (Verses 22–23).
2. **Who the Unknown God Is** (Verses 24–29).
3. **The Message From God** (Verses 30–31).

1. The Introduction. He addressed them by the usual phrase, "Ye men of Athens." However, the charge he brings against them is not superstition. What he said was that the Athenians were a very religious people, given to the worship of many deities. It was a wise statement. It would be well if some Gospel preachers would profit by it. In preaching the Gospel to Romanists or to the Jews one does well not to antagonize their customs, but to avoid such controversies. Paul had found in Athens an altar with a strange inscription, "To the unknown God."* How this altar came to be in Athens is not known. It certainly bore witness to the fact that the true God was an unknown God to the Athenians. In this fact the Apostle found the true starting point. The human heart can set up gods and altars, beginning with the likeness of man, then of birds, quadrupeds and reptiles (Romans i:22), but the true God the human heart with its vain reasonings cannot discover. He can only be known from revelation. And Paul is now in the presence of this illustrious audience

*Other ancient authorities speak of the existence of such altars in Athens. For instance, Philostratus and Lucian.

to make known the unknown God. "Him," he said, "I declare unto you."

2. Who the Unknown God Is. He unfolds the truth of God as a Person. He is a personal God and as such He made the world and all things therein. This truth was not owned by the Epicureans or the Stoics. The Epicureans with their atomic theory, that the universe came together by itself, and the Stoics with their cold Pantheism denied this fundamental truth. This bold announcement effectually set aside the philosophical babblings of these wise men, and these few words completely answer the modern Materialists and Pantheists. With the next sentence Paul lays bare the follies of paganism. As Lord of heaven and earth, because He is the Creator, He does not dwell in temples made with hands, nor can He be worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything. In this statement he leaned towards the expressions used by the Epicureans, who declared that the divine nature is self sufficiency and needs nothing from us. But at the same time he rebukes the Stoics by showing that God giveth to all life, and breath and all things. He is the Preserver as well as the Creator. Next Paul shows that God created man and that all nations of men are made by Him of one blood. This was not believed in paganism. Polytheism was closely connected with the conception that the different races came into existence in different ways. The various races therefore had different racial gods. The Greeks had divided the world into two classes, Greeks and Barbarians. That they, the proud Greeks, had sprung from the same stock as the Barbarians must have humbled them greatly. It rebuked their national pride. All the Apostle said to the cultured Greeks, the great philosophers was elementary. The most simple truth about God and the origin of man could not be discovered by the keenest intellect. How all this bears out the divine statement in

Romans. "Because having known God they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their reasonings and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves wise (philosophers) they became fools" (Rom. i:21–22).

And furthermore Paul states that God is the governor over the nations. He has set the bounds of their habitations. The creature is to seek after God (not Lord as in the A. V.), if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us. All this, and that in Him we live and move and have our being, is in connection with God as Creator, that He is the giver of life and breath and all things. The creature is sustained by Him. Then in connection with this he quotes from their own poets. "As certain also of your poets have said, for we are also His offspring." Two Greek poets had spoken thus, Cleanthus and Aratus. Aratus was a Stoic. Thus he used the expressions of their own poets against themselves. These poets had more wisdom than the philosophers. In quoting this sentence from the poets Paul presses home the truth that man in his nature is the creation of God, created in the image of God. But where has man drifted to? Idolatry in its wicked foolishness is exposed. The Godhead has been made like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. It uncovered the miserable folly into which their reasonings had led them. How significant that in cultured Athens the great Apostle had to come down to the most elementary things of the truth.

3. The Message From God. Their sin of idolatry had been uncovered and now the apostle brings a message to their hearts. He calls the times of their boasted philosophies and progress "the times of this ignorance," and assures them that God has overlooked it, passed it by. But now He calls to repentance.

He aims at their conscience to awaken them to the sense of need to turn away from idols to the true God. God sends to all one message, be they Jew or Gentiles, Greeks or Barbarians, to repent. And then he states the reason. A day is appointed in which He will judge the world in righteousness. The one through whom God will judge is a Man ordained by Him; then follows the declaration of the resurrection of this Man. The day of judgment here does not mean a universal judgment (a term not known in Scripture) nor the great white throne judgment. The judgment here does not concern the dead at all, but it is the judgment of the habitable world. It is the judgment which will take place when the Man whom God raised from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ comes the second time. His resurrection is the assurance of it.

But why did the apostle not press home the Gospel and speak of the forgiveness of sins? They were not ready for this. He talked to them as philosophers to stir up their consciences.

As soon as they heard of the resurrection of the dead, it was enough for most of them. Some began to mock. They plainly proved that they were far from the condition to hear more of salvation. Others said, as Felix said later, we will hear thee again of this matter. But even this testimony was not in vain. Some clave unto him and believed. No doubt he took these apart and instructed them in God's way of salvation. Among them is mentioned a member of the Areopagus, Dionysius, the Areopagite. Tradition says that he became the leader of the Athenian Assembly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

From Athens Paul journeyed to Corinth. This was the capital of Achaia and a short distance from Athens. It was a different city altogether. Corinth was then a great commercial center and had a cosmopolitan character. Here the Apostle settled down for one year and six months and Silas and Timotheus joined him here. It was one of the most immoral cities then in existence. The grossest immoralities were here practised in connection with religion. In different ways this chapter is an interesting one. Besides working at his trade as tentmaker and preaching the Gospel, he wrote by inspiration in Corinth the two Epistles to the Thessalonians and the Epistle to the Romans.

I. In Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla. His testimony and separation from the Jews (Verses 1–8).

II. Encouragement from the Lord in a vision (Verses 9–11).

III. Paul and Gallio (Verses 12–17).

IV. From Corinth to Ephesus and Antioch. The second journey ended (Verses 18–22).

V. Establishing disciples in Galatia and Phrygia (Verse 23).

VI. Apollos, the Alexandrian (Verses 24–28).

I. In Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla. His testimony and separation from the Jews.

After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome), and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them,

and wrought: (for by their occupation they were tentmakers). And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus *was* Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man*'s house, named Justus, *one* that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. (Verses 1–8.)

For the first time Aquila and his wife Priscilla are now mentioned. They appear as prominent characters in the Epistles. Paul was guided to them and abode with them, for like himself, they were tent-makers, an occupation which reminds one of the pilgrim character of the child of God. Aquila was a native of Pontus, who had settled in Rome. Both he and his wife Priscilla may have been believers, when Paul met them, though the record speaks of him as a Jew. If they had become believers as a result of becoming acquainted with the Apostle the record of this fact would have appeared in this chapter. Perhaps they had heard and believed the Gospel in Rome. A persecution against the Jewish race had broken out in Rome and they with many others were banished from the city. Rome hated the Jews, many of whom had settled in the city. Tiberius had sent some 4000 Roman Jews into an unhealthy country, in hope that the fever there would destroy them, and Claudius in the year 49 had banished them entirely from the capital of the Roman Empire. The Roman biographer and historian Suetonius* in his life of Claudius gives the reason for the harsh edict of the Emperor Claudius

*He lived during the reign of Hadrian in the beginning of the second century.

because "the Jews were constantly in tumult at the instigation of one Chrestus." The word "Chrestus" means undoubtedly "Christos," that is Christ.

This interesting couple had established themselves in Corinth, and what a joy it must have been to the Apostle when he was led to their home. How sweet their fellowship must have been as they toiled together and spoke one to another about the Lord! From the same chapter we learn that after Paul's ministry had terminated they went to Ephesus (verse 19). From 1 Cor. xvi:19 we learn that they were still there when that epistle was written. But in writing to the Romans Paul says, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus" (Rom. xvi:3), so that they had wandered back to Rome and were in happy fellowship with the Roman assembly. 2 Tim. iv:19 tells us that once more they were back in Ephesus where Timothy had his abode. "Salute Prisca (an abbreviation of Priscilla) and Aquila." They were indeed strangers and pilgrims, but blessed to know that their wanderings were directed by the Lord. Priscilla is mostly mentioned before Aquila, from which we may learn that she, like other notable women of apostolic days, "labored for the Gospel."

It is significant that here it is prominently mentioned that the Apostle worked at his trade as tent-maker. He had also done so in Thessalonica. "For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail, for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of God" (1 Thess. ii:9; 2 Thess. iii:8). He labored at Ephesus. "Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me" (Acts xx:34). From this we learn that he also supported his fellowhelpers. Corinth was a wealthy city. He did not take anything whatever from the Corinthians, of which he reminds them in both of his Epistles. In this way he illustrated most blessedly the gift of God,

the Gospel, without money and without price. What a contrast with the trafficking in spiritual things we behold about us in our days! And yet it is equally true that the Lord has ordained "that they which preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel" (1 Cor. ix:14).

It seems that Paul followed the same method of work as he did in Thessalonica. First, he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks (verse 4). This must have been altogether on Old Testament ground, showing the divine predictions concerning Christ. When Silas and Timotheus arrived, then he was greatly pressed in spirit and testified to the Jews more fully that Jesus is the Christ. That there was blessed fruit we learn from his epistles to the Corinthians. He himself baptized Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. i:14–16). And he was with them in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. His speech was far different from the one he had used in addressing the philosophers of Athens. "My speech was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. ii:3–4). His presence was base unto them. "Who in presence am base among you" (2 Cor. x:1). His bodily presence, these Corinthians said, is weak, and his speech contemptible (2 Cor. x:10). It is possible that he was greatly depressed. Silas and Timotheus brought him good news from the Thessalonians. "But now when Timotheus came from you unto us and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you. Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith" (1 Thess. iii:6–7). He must have written the first Epistle to the Thessalonians immediately after the arrival of Silas and Timotheus. They also may have brought to Paul the fellowship from the saints in Philippi, which may

have reached Thessalonica after Paul had left (Phil. iv:15–16). Opposition from the side of the Jews followed after the bold declaration that Jesus is the Christ. Not alone did they reject the Gospel but they blasphemed. Alas! this blaspheming is still heard among the Jews, whenever the full claims of the Lord Jesus Christ are pressed upon their consciences. For the second time Paul declares that he will go to the Gentiles.

Next we behold the Apostle of the Gentiles in the house of a devout Gentile named Justus. His house was next to the synagogue. Here the Lord's special blessing rested upon the testimony, for the chief ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, with his house, as well as many other Corinthians, believed on the Lord. His baptism as well as the others by the Apostle himself we have already mentioned.

II. Encouragement from the Lord in a vision.

> Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. (Verses 9–11.)

It is blessed to see when this encouraging vision took place. Paul had been greatly depressed, and fear and trembling, as seen from the first Epistle to the Corinthians, had taken hold on him. The good news from Thessalonica had cheered him and the conversion of Crispus and the other Corinthians encouraged him much. But he needed a direct encouragement from the Lord. The Lord knew all which awaited His faithful servant. He knew of the plot to bring him before the judgment seat of the deputy of the province. The Lord wanted His servant to be without anxiety and assured him that no man could set on him or hurt him. He also told him that He had much people in Corinth. Perhaps if this vision had not been given to Paul at this time

he might have been tempted to leave Corinth, but now he felt authorized to continue for a year and six months. A strong assembly was gathered. As we do not write on the Corinthian Epistles we cannot follow the most interesting theme of the condition of the Corinthian church. But the Epistles mention that the majority of believers were composed of the poorer class. Of another class were Crispus, the once chief ruler of the synagogue, Stephanas and Gaius, who were given to hospitality and therefore must have been people of means; Chloe, a lady who had many servants; Erastus, who held a responsible position, and others. Then there were present diversities of gifts, the gift of tongues being prominent and responsible for certain disorders. After the Apostle had left, divisions came in and the leaven of vainglory and worldliness, even to immoralities, got in amongst them and did its dreadful work.

III. Paul and Gallio.

> And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, This *fellow* persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O *ye* Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and *of* your law, look ye *to it;* for I will be no judge of such *matters*. And he drave them from the judgment seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things. (Verses 12-17.)

Gallio was deputy, or proconsul of Achaia. This proves the accuracy of the record before us. Achaia up to the year 44 was united to the province of Macedonia. But the Emperor Claudius restored Achaia as a province and it had then its own proconsul. We know from Roman historians a good deal of the personality of Gallio. "He came

from a Spanish family which had won for itself a distinguished place in Roman letters and society. Annaeus Seneca, his father, was a well known rhetorician, Seneca the Stoic and tutor of Nero was his brother, and the poet Lucan his nephew. His own name was originally M. Annaeus Novatus, but having been adopted by Lucius Junius Gallio he also adopted his name. He had attained the highest office in the state, the consulship. But he was best known by his amiable character; "sweet Gallio," Statius calls him, and Seneca speaks of him "as one who could not be loved enough."

Before this man the Jews brought Paul, accusing him that he persuades men to worship God contrary to law. The Satanic attempt, however, laid not so much in the accusation as in the insurrection these Jews made. The whole Jewish community was stirred up by them to impress Gallio with the seriousness of the offence. And the accusation itself was couched in deceptive terms. It reads as if Paul had done something against the Roman law. This is exactly what they meant to do, namely, to constitute the Apostle a transgressor of the law of the Roman Empire. But Gallio was too keen for them. He at once recognized the deception. It was their own Jewish law about which they were disturbed. So without even listening to Paul, what he had to say for himself, he settled the case at once by a few well chosen words and then drove them out of the court. Then the Greeks who had witnessed the whole scene turned against the Jews. They had their spokesman in Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue. He must have taken the place of Crispus, who had believed on the Lord. Upon him the Greeks fell and gave him a good beating. And Gallio had nothing to say to this. Sosthenes deserved all he got.

If the Sosthenes who is mentioned in the opening verse of the first Epistle of the Corinthians is the same, then

he profited immensely by his experience. Paul addresses him as a brother. We believe he is the same person, for the Grace of God delights to take up such characters and show in them what Grace can do.

IV. From Corinth to Ephesus, Jerusalem, and Antioch. The second journey ended.

> And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea, for he had a vow. And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; but bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus. And when he had landed at Cesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. (Verses 18–22.)

The great Apostle was not in a hurry to leave Corinth; he tarried there a good while. "He that believeth shall not make haste." When the Lord's own time arrived he took his leave of the brethren and sailed from the port of Corinth, Cenchrea, for Syria. The only companions mentioned are Priscilla and Aquila. The interesting item is the statement concerning the vow and the cutting of the hair. To whom does it refer? Did Aquila or Paul make the vow? Many able expositors believe that Aquila is meant, while others contend that it was Paul who had made the vow. Those who believe that Aquila is in view, call attention to the fact that the name of his wife Priscilla precedes his name and that in this way Aquila is marked out as the person who made the vow. But if the reader turns to Rom. xvi:3 and 2 Tim. iv:19, he will find that Priscilla is named first, so that this argument does not hold good. Inasmuch as the Apostle Paul is the prominent figure in the account, the statement must refer to him. Every vow made a visit to the temple in Jerusalem neces-

sary (Numbers xi:1–21). But we learn that Aquila remained in Ephesus and did not go to Jerusalem. It is not necessary to charge The Apostle on account of this vow with an out and out violation of the great truths so fully taught in the Epistle to the Galatians. To the Jews he became as a Jew and under the law (1 Cor. ix:19–23); and no doubt he made certain concessions in this direction. Some Christians seem to look upon the great Apostle as almost infallible in his actions and repudiate the thought that he could have made a mistake. The great Epistles he wrote *are* infallible, for the Holy Spirit is the author of them, but no such perfection can be claimed for his Christian life and walk. He too was "a man of like passions" and we shall find how faithfully and yet how tenderly the Holy Spirit reveals in the next chapters his actions in self will.

Ephesus, which was closed by divine authority (xvi:6) in the beginning of this journey, is now reached by the Apostle. It was a fine city known not only by its great commerce and as the capital of the Roman province Asia, but also by the great temple of Artemis. Models of this temple were made to be carried along for a charm or to be placed in houses (see xix:24). Ephesus had a very large Jewish population. They were wealthy and influential. The Jewish historian Josephus mentions the fact that the Roman government, as well as the citizens of Ephesus, accorded to them special privileges in the free observance of their customs. Paul soon entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. The request to stay longer was denied by him. We surely see haste here instead of calmness and waiting on the Lord. Having not consented to remain, he bade them farewell, promising them to return, if it be God's will. The reason given for his haste was his desire to reach Jersualem to keep this feast, which was Pentecost. Why he did not stay with such an opportunity and then

telling the Jews of the absolute necessity of visiting Jerusalem is indeed strange. What follows reveals still greater haste with no record at all of what he did in Jerusalem or what was accomplished by him. He sailed from Ephesus, landed at Cesarea and went up, which means Jerusalem, he saluted the church and went down to Antioch. Thus ended the second missionary journey. Perhaps an intense love for his brethren in Jerusalem, his deep yearning for them, led him in this course.

V. Establishing disciples in Galatia and Phrygia.

> And after he had spent some time *there*, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. (Verse 23.)

This work was next laid upon his heart and with it the third journey began. The account is very brief but if we read the Epistle to the Galatians we can well understand how needful and important this work was. Judaizing teachers had invaded the churches which had been founded in large numbers. Their teaching was of the most pernicious kind. They taught the observance of the law and its works as being absolutely necessary for salvation. They perverted the Gospel of Grace and preached that Gospel which had the divine anathema upon it, because it sets aside that blessed finished work of Christ on the Cross. "For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. ii:21). "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. iv:4). Their teaching was extremely bold, for they repeated the false teaching which had been brought before the council in Jerusalem, "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts xv:1). At the same time they had impeached the apostolic authority of Paul. The Galatian Christians, who had been so loving and tender towards Paul, so that if

it had been possible they would have plucked out their own eyes to give them to the apostle, the same people were now being moved against Paul and the Gospel he had preached unto them. The Epistle to the Galatians was undoubtedly written during the Apostle's second visit to Ephesus and it shows that perhaps immediately after the recorded visit in this chapter the judaizing element increased in strength. Most likely the news of the grave danger which was then threatening the Galatian churches had reached him in Antioch.

VI. Apollos the Alexandrian.

> And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publicly, shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ. (Verses 24–28.)

This is an extremely beautiful incident. A new preacher appeared among the Jews in Ephesus, Apollos the Alexandrian. He is described as an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures. In Alexandria, Philo, the great Hellenistic Jewish Philosopher, had flourished. He was born about 20 B. C. and died after the year 40 A. D. He introduced Platonism into Judaism. In all probability Apollos was one of his disciples, but he accepted that which Philo did not believe. He had come most likely in touch with disciples of John the Baptist and had been baptized with John's baptism unto repentance. He knew that Jesus is the Messiah, knew the facts of His earthly life and the

miracles He did. Of the meaning of His death and resurrection Apollos knew nothing, nor had he any knowledge of the Holy Spirit. The entire truth of the Gospel of Grace was unknown to Him. The text in the authorized version that he "taught diligently the things of the Lord" is incorrect. The correct translation is "he taught diligently the things concerning Jesus." Yet this little knowledge he had concerning Him who had appeared in the midst of His people, in whom he believed as the Messiah and King of Israel, set his soul on fire. With his great knowledge in the Scriptures, such as the learned Jews possess, he spoke boldly in the synagogue, proving, no doubt, from the Law and the Prophets, that Jesus is the Messiah. Yet how limited was his message. What difficulties must have arisen in his mind! What questions, which he could not answer! Nearly twenty years had gone since that blessed Person, in whom he believed, had disappeared, and that Kingdom which Jewish hope and expectation associates with the King Messiah had not been manifested, and the promises given through the Prophets had not found their fulfilment. Yet he continued to speak boldly concerning the things of Jesus.

But God did not leave him long in this condition. The Lord had guided him to Ephesus, and the same Lord had arranged it so that Priscilla and Aquila remained in Ephesus. He had a service for them. Both Priscilla and Aquila listened to him and must have been made glad by the courageous testimony of Apollos. They felt at once how little he really knew of the Lord, and they did not turn away from him, but sought him out and took him in to expound to him the way of God more perfectly. And the great, eloquent preacher on whose lips hung the multitudes, was humble enough to sit at the feet of a tent-maker and his wife and receive instructions from them. How little of the patience of Aquila and Priscilla and the hu-

mility of Apollos we see in our days! If some humble Christian would go now to some great and eloquent preacher to show him the way of God more perfectly, what answer would he receive? And how often towards those who are inferior in spiritual knowledge those who are well taught show but little patience. Instead of condemning such who are ignorant of the truth we should seek them out in a loving way and lead them on. Priscilla was without question of greater intelligence than Aquila and it was not out of her sphere at all to impart instruction unto Apollos.

His deeper knowledge of the Lord, the truth of His death on the cross, His presence in Glory at the right hand of God closed his ministry in Ephesus. The Jews in large numbers may listen to an eloquent man, even if he proves from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah, but the preaching of the cross is the great stumbling block. It is still so in our day.

Apollos went to Corinth and became a great blessing to the assembly there. Mightily he convinced the Jews, publicly showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. What a blessed factor he became in the Corinthian church is seen from the testimony of the Holy Spirit through Paul in the first Epistle to the Corinthians. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. iii:6). But there likewise was a faction of the Christians calling themselves after this great preacher, "I am of Apollos." Later he left Corinth and returned to Ephesus and was very reluctant to return to Corinth, though Paul had invited him to do so. "As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren; but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time" (1 Cor. xvi:12). As he was such an humble man, it is probable that he refused to return for fear of attracting the people to himself, as it had been the case already.

CHAPTER XIX.

The chapter which we have reached is as interesting as it is important. In the foreground stands another manifestation of the Holy Spirit, when He came upon the twelve disciples of John and they spake with tongues. This is followed by extraordinary blessings and the manifestation of the power of God and the power of Satan. The acts of the Holy Spirit and of Satan are very pronounced in this chapter. Then the chapter is important because Paul's first step towards Jerusalem is recorded. We divide the chapter in five parts.

I. The second visit of Paul to Ephesus. The twelve disciples of John (Verses 1–7).

II. The Apostle's continued labors. The separation of the disciples. The Province Asia evangelized (Verses 8–10).

III. The Power of God and the Power of Satan (Verses 11–20).

IV. Paul plans to go to Jerusalem and to visit Rome. (Verses 21–22).

V. The opposition and riot at Ephesus. (Verses 23-41.)

I. The second visit of Paul to Ephesus. The twelve disciples of John.

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should

believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve. (Verses 1–7.)

Once more Paul appears in Ephesus and is brought now in touch with certain disciples. Some have taken them to have been the fruit of Apollos' labors in Ephesus. If that had been the case and Apollos knew them, he certainly would have imparted unto them the knowledge his own soul so richly enjoyed through the instructions of the godly Priscilla and Aquila. As Ephesus was a large city it is not surprising that the twelve disciples were not known to Paul during his first and very brief visit, nor to Priscilla and Aquila. When Paul met these disciples he must have been impressed with some lack in them. Perhaps the joy and peace which should characterize every true Christian was completely absent in them and therefore the Apostle asked at once a very vital and fundamental question: "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" But the word "since" is mistranslated and must be changed into "when." This unfortunate translation has done a great deal of mischief. Upon this little word "since" certain preachers and Bible teachers have built their unscriptural theory that the Holy Spirit must be definitely received in a second experience, which they either term a "second blessing"—"baptism of the Holy Spirit," or by some other name. According to these teachers a person may be a Christian, a true disciple, saved by Grace and yet be entirely destitute of the Holy Spirit. The word "since" is always emphasized by these men. Have ye received the Holy Spirit *since* ye believed? You must get the Holy Spirit after you have believed and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. Then a lot of rules how to surrender and to receive the Holy Spirit are given. All this is wrong.

If the word "when" were put in, this whole misconception would disappear.

Paul makes the gift of the Spirit a test of true discipleship. If they were true believers they received the Holy Spirit *when* they believed, that is when they accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. If they did not receive the Holy Spirit then it is an evidence that they did not believe. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii:9).

But were these disciples whom Paul met Christian disciples? Not at all. They knew nothing whatever of Christianity. Their knowledge about the person of Christ was more limited than the knowledge which Apollos possessed. The questions put by the Apostle brings out the fact that they knew nothing whatever of the gift of the Holy Spirit and that they had been baptized with John's baptism unto repentance. This is how far their creed went: of Christ and His great redemption work they knew nothing whatever. Though the record does not give an account of it Paul must have preached Christ and the Gospel to those twelve disciples. Then they believed and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* After the laying on of hands the Holy Spirit came on them and they spake with tongues and prophesied. These were the outward signs. They were then sealed by the Holy Spirit and added by Him as members to the body of Christ, the church.

This is the last time in this book that we read that the Holy Spirit was given and that they spoke with tongues. It is well to review the few times reported in this historical book, when the Holy Spirit was communicated to the different companies of believers.

*This is the only case of rebaptism recorded in Acts. Notice that it was not Christian baptism with which they had been previously baptized in water.

1. On the day of Pentecost. The one hundred and twenty were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke with other tongues. No laying on of hands is mentioned here. They were all Jews who received the Holy Spirit on that day (Acts ii).

2. Peter and John went to Samaria. The Samaritans had believed and had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, but the Holy Spirit had not been given to them. The reason was explained by us in the exposition of Chapter viii. Peter and John laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Nothing is said that they prophesied or spoke in tongues.

3. While Peter preached the Gospel to Cornelius and his house the Holy Spirit fell on them which heard the Word. They spoke with tongues and praised God (Acts x).

4. The last record in our present chapter. Jews in the dispersion receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands by the Apostle Paul. In every case it is the same Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, who came down from heaven on the day of Pentecost. It would be incorrect to say that He came anew from heaven, when the Samaritans, the Gentiles and the twelve disciples received Him. He came to this earth on the day of Pentecost and no other coming was necessary. It is unscriptural to speak of "another outpouring" of the Holy Spirit or pray for a new baptism with the Spirit. But the different records show different manifestations of the same Spirit upon different groups of people, Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles.

That all this is not to be repeated is obvious. Apostles communicated the Spirit by laying on of hands. There are no more apostles and apostolic authority, unless some one believes in that ridiculous, if not evil, doctrine of apostolic succession. That Paul here laid on his hands and the Holy Spirit was given to these twelve men just as the Samaritans received the Spirit after the laying on of

hands of Peter and John, proved him to be an Apostle just as much as they. This is striking, for the enemies of Paul, the judaizing teachers, which were corrupting the Galatian churches, vigorously denied the authority of the Apostle Paul.

But the Holy Spirit is no longer communicated in this extraordinary way, but by the hearing of faith, and every child of God possesses Him as the indwelling guest. Our endeavor is not to seek more of Him, but to let Him take possession of us, for which He has come to our hearts when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. To seek the so-called "gift of tongues" as a sign that we have the Holy Spirit, is a morbid condition and a dangerous desire.

II. The Apostle's continued labors. The separation of the disciples. The province of Asia evangelized.

> And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. (Verses 8–10).

Paul continued to labor in the synagogue, but matters had now to reach a climax. For three months he disputed with the Jews The great theme was the Kingdom of God, which means more than the teaching concerning that Kingdom, which is promised to Israel and which some day will be established. No doubt it entered largely into the disputings of the Apostle with the Jews, but it was not confined to that phase of the Kingdom. Jews who believe their own Scriptures and still hold to the Jewish hope are quite willing to listen to arguments touching the realization of this hope; but if the Kingdom of God is preached

which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. xiv:17) they oppose this and harden their hearts. This deeper message of the Gospel was not received by the multitude of Jews. Some hardened themselves and were disobedient and spoke evil of that way. Separation from this unbelieving and disobedient mass was the next step. In this way the assembly in Ephesus was formed. A number of brethren were also with Paul in Ephesus. His own hands ministered unto his own necessities and to them that were with him (Acts xx:34). The same information we gain from the Epistle to the Galatians, which Paul wrote from Ephesus with his own hand (Gal. i:2). These companions of Paul were Timotheus and Erastus, Gaius and Aristarchus, two brethren of Thessalonica, Titus, Tychicus and Trophimus (Acts xix:22, 29; Acts xx:4; 2 Cor. vii:6). Then there were Aquila and Priscilla and a number of converts. The first fruit was undoubtedly Epenetus* (Rom. xvi:5), also Onesiphorus and his house (2 Tim. i:16), Hymenaeus, Alexander, Phygellus and Hermogenes of whose bad record we read in 1 Tim. i:20 and 2 Tim. i:15. The assembly had elders and of them and the Apostle's faithful labors we shall read more in the next chapter. The record here tells us that the work was continued in the school of one Tyrannus, some large building obtained for that purpose. Most likely the assembly itself met elsewhere. Then the entire province of Asia of which Ephesus was the capital heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jew and Greeks. A blessed work of evangelization was done.

III. The power of God and the power of Satan.

And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul. So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or

*Correct reading is "who is first fruits of Asia unto Christ" not Achaia as in the A. V.

aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men:* and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. (Verses 11–20.)

Ephesus was a stronghold of Satan. Here many evil things both superstitious and satanic were practised. Books containing formula for sorcery and other ungodly and forbidden arts were plentiful in that city. The Jews themselves were contaminated with these evil practices. God was pleased to perform special miracles by the hands of Paul. Handkerchiefs and aprons he had used healed the sick and drove out demons. Rationalists and higher critics explain these miracles as being simply superstitions. "But in this and similar narratives Christian faith finds no difficulty whatever. All miraculous working is an exertion of the direct power of God; a suspension by Him of His ordinary laws; and whether He will use *any* instrument in doing this, or *what instrument*, must depend altogether on His own purpose in the miracle—the effect to be produced on the recipients, beholders, or bearers."* God wanted to bear witness to His messenger and His message that they were of Him and therefore He manifested

*Greek New Testament.— Alford.

here His extraordinary power. But this power was not in Paul nor were such manifestations to continue. They ceased. That which claims to be a continuation in the Romish church (relics, most of them spurious, for which claim is made that they possess miraculous powers) is nothing but superstition and fanaticism. Equally fanatical are the present day claims of a certain class of Christians, that the apostolic pentecostal gifts are being restored. It is a foolish thing, to say the least, if some of these misguided people imitate what is recorded here in connection with the great Apostle, and send handkerchiefs about, claiming that they actually have cured sickness.

That this manifestation of the power of God in this most remarkable way was likewise needed to bring to naught the evil powers of darkness, which were so active in Ephesus, is revealed in what follows. Jewish instruments of Satan in the person of the sons of Sceva, a chief priest, men who were sorcerers and dealt in magic, were in Ephesus. This is the fourth time we read of such satanic instruments. The first was Simon Magus. This subtle instrument claimed to be converted and tried to buy the power of the Holy Spirit with money. Elymas, or Bar Jesus, was the second, and he opposed the Gospel, going forth to the Gentiles, a type, as we pointed out in our exposition, of the Jewish nation in their opposition and blindness. In Philippi a damsel with the spirit of Python had cried after Paul and through her the enemy had tried his work. The seven sons of Sceva tried to imitate the power of God as it was manifested through Paul; but they knew not the Lord Jesus Christ. They were professional exorcists travelling from place to place and preaching the expulsion of evil spirits. All kinds of mysterious things were used by these exorcists; the use of different names of God in driving out the evil spirits were especially resorted to. The so-called *Kabbala* and many parts of the Talmud

are full of these mysterious things of magic. In some cases no doubt there was reality, as we learn from Matthew xii:27.

The sons of Sceva used the name of Jesus over a man who had an evil spirit. "We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preaches." They used simply the name of Jesus and avoided the name Lord. The effect was disastrous. The demon acknowledged that he knew Jesus and Paul, but "who are ye?" The man with fury, energized by the superhuman strength of the demon, overcame the two, tore their clothes so that naked and wounded they had to flee from the house. The demon turned against them. A worse fate will some day befall those, who use the name, which is above every other name, without being His. "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name cast out demons? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew xii:22–23).

The punishment which had fallen upon the sons of Sceva made a profound impression upon the whole city and that blessed name which is above every other name was magnified. Many of those who had believed seemed to have been secretly attached to these curious arts—that is, magical things. They were deeply convicted of this sin and then confessed the evil deeds of darkness. But more than that, they brought their parchments and rolls which contained the magical formulas, incantations and adjurations. These formulas and written amulets had at that time a world-wide reputation and were known by the name "*Ephesia gramata*"—the Ephesian letters. They brought them together and burned them before all men. Some eight thousand dollars' worth of manuscripts was quickly consumed by the flames. A greater fire would result if the evil books, books on Occultism, Spiritualism, especially that

wicked work, which is placed alongside the Bible, the text-book of "Christian Science"—Science and Health, and others were piled up to be burned. But such a day is coming when the fire shall consume these evil works of darkness. A great victory had been gained over the power of Satan. "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed."

IV. Paul Plans to go to Jerusalem and visit Rome.

> After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season. (Verses 21–22.)

We reach now a critical point in the labors of the great Apostle. The 21st verse marks an important change, which introduces us to the last stage of the recorded acts of Paul in this historical account. *Rome* is the goal, which looms up before him. "I must also see Rome." And he saw Rome, but not in the way as he purposed in his spirit, but as the prisoner of the Lord. His journey begins now towards that great city and at the close of the book we find him there a prisoner, "preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." The story of his journey to Jerusalem, a journey in which he perseveres though repeatedly warned by the Spirit of God, his arrest in Jerusalem, his trials and addresses before the Jews, before Felix, Festus and King Agrippa, his voyage to Rome and shipwreck and arrival in Rome are the contents of the remaining part of our book. The record of great victories of the Gospel and its spread by the Apostle to the Gentiles comes suddenly to an end and we see that Gospel he preached opposed by Judaism and legalism as well as by the great world-power Rome. The great apostle with

his God-given, heavenly-revealed Gospel of the Glory is shut up in Rome. It is nothing less than a great prophecy of what was to happen to that Gospel.

A recent writer on the Book of Acts calls this part of the book, "the passing and passion of Paul." He sees a correspondency between the Lord and Paul. Like our Lord, Paul was accused by the Jews and delivered by them into the hands of the Gentiles. The Lord had said of Paul, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts ix:16). He had sufferings and afflictions in many ways throughout the years of his great activity. In his second epistle to the Corinthians he rehearses these. "Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. xi:24–27).

But now the time of his special sufferings were drawing near. Of this fact the Holy Spirit testified directly (Acts xx:23; xxi:11.)

The question has often been raised how the purposing of Paul in the spirit to go again to Jerusalem is to be understood. Is the word "spirit" to be written with a capital "S" or not? In other words, did he purpose in the Spirit of God after prolonged prayer, to go up to Jerusalem? Did the Holy Spirit guide him to take up to the city of his fathers the contributions from Achaia and Macedonia for the poor saints? (Romans xv:25–26). It could not have been the Spirit of God who prompted him to go once more to Jerusalem, for we find that during the journey the Holy Spirit warned him a number of times not to go to Jerusalem. These

warnings were not heeded, but they prove conclusively that Paul purposed in his own spirit. He was called to evangelize; to continue to preach the glorious Gospel, and it was a turning aside from the great ministry committed unto him. But behind his burning desire to go up to Jerusalem stood the mighty constraint of love for his own beloved brethren. How he did love them and how his heart, filled with the love of God, yearned over them! This love is so fully expressed in his epistle to the Romans. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed (or separated) from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. ix:1–2). "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. x:1). This holy love and courage prompted him to say, when once more his brethren had besought him by the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem, "What mean ye to weep and break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts xxi:13). And the Lord in His mercy, who knows the motives of the heart, over-ruled the error of His servant. Later from the prison in Rome, Paul could write in his joyous epistle to the Philippians. "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places" (Phil. i:12–13). All things, even our mistakes, must work together for good. Before we can follow Paul on his last journey to Jerusalem, we have to consider the account of the riot which took place in Ephesus.

V. The opposition and the riot at Ephesus.

And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made

silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands. So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at naught; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. And when they heard *these sayings*, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great Diana of the Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself into the theatre. Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians. And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, *Ye* men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open and there are deputies: let them implead one another. But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly. (Verses 23–41.)

The Ephesian Gentiles became greatly agitated through the influence of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit

of darkness, which worked in them (Ephes. ii:2). The result was the great riot.

"Fully to appreciate the incident, a more detailed account of Ephesus is required. At Ephesus there met together four authorities: 1. The supreme authority of Rome represented by the *proconsul*. For judicial purposes the provinces were divided into shires (conventus), each with its assize town. In the province Asia Ephesus was the chief assize town; and accordingly court days (verse 38) were kept there, when justice was administered by the pro-consul. 2. The city itself, like Athens, was 'free' and it retained its Greek constitution, which was democratic in form. There was a Senate, to which power gravitated in imperial times. But nominally Ephesus was still governed by the *Demos* or People (verse 30) assembled in their *Ecclesia* or assembly.

"An Ecclesia was held three times a month and these meetings were the regular or ordinary assemblies (verse 32), but an extraordinary assembly could be convened as on the present occasion. Where, as in cities of the empire, the powers of such an assembly were limited to purely domestic and formal matters, the substantial authority would fall into the hands of its secretary—the official who summoned and *dismissed* the assembly (verse 41), kept the minutes and acted as chairman. Thus the secretary of the assembly or *townclerk* (verse 35), would naturally be one of the magnates of the city; and this we find to have been the case from the inscriptions, in which the secretary often appears as also holding the highest office, such as the Asiarchate.

"3. The Asiarchate was a provincial office. Each province had a council composed of delegates from the chief cities. Their chief business was the supervision of the provincial worship of the emperor, a cult, which furnished, besides a test of royalty, a bond of unity for the empire. A temple and altar to Rome and the emperor were erected in some city and the common worship of the province was cel-

ebrated there with games and festivals. The president of the common council acted as high priest and presided over these festivities and games, which were given at his expense. In return, he enjoyed the title of 'Ruler of the province'—Asiarch (the one over the province Asia), Galatarch—over Galatia, etc. The Asiarchs of verse 31, then, were such high priests of the aristocracy and plutocracy of Asia. There is a difficulty in the use of the plural, for as a rule there was only one Ruler for a province. It has been suggested that the Ruler retained the designation as an honorary title after his period of office. But a better explanation is to be found in the exceptional prosperity of Asia.*"

The great temple, that of Diana (Artemis), was likewise in Ephesus. Excavations of this temple have been made in the past and numerous inscriptions bear witness to the goddess and the worship connected with it. Her name is found in those inscriptions to have been exactly that, which the mob used, "the Great Diana." The usual invocations to these goddesses were "Great Diana" or *Artemis*, the word used in the Greek. In other inscriptions she was called "the most great goddess." The temple of itself was a magnificent structure. Some parts may be seen in the British Museum. The structure was about 420 feet long and nearly 250 wide. Hundreds of persons, such as priests, eunuchs, temple wardens, virgin priestesses, were in connection with the temple. The temple was stored with rich treasures of gold and silver. A large part of the city lived on the trade, which had been created by the existence of the great temple and the thousands of pilgrims which flocked to the idolatrous festivities and games. There was a guild of silversmiths, and they manufactured shrines of Artemis and most likely all kinds of souvenirs, little models of the temple and the goddess. Demetrius was the leader of this guild and in the meeting he called, he stated before the

*R. P. Rackham.

silversmiths that they well knew that this seemingly religious craft is the source of their wealth. Quite a confession this silversmith made. And it is not different in the great "world religion" though it may have the name of Christian attached to it. The same selling of idolatrous objects, rosaries, candles, statues, blessed (?) objects and many other things by which money is obtained under the cover of religion.

But Demetrius also bears witness to the great influence of the Gospel. "This Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands." How active Paul must have been and his testimony was backed up with the power of God. Not alone was the craft of the silversmith in great danger, but the great Diana and the temple was in danger of collapse under the preaching of the tentmaker of Tarsus. It may have been a well-plotted scheme when the company of silversmiths in fury rushed out of their meeting room into the streets and shouted at the top of their voices. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." The whole city was aroused. Gaius and Aristarchus, the Macedonian companions of Paul, were dragged into the theatre. This was an enormous place, being able to shelter about 25,000 persons. Paul himself was ready to face the angry mob, but the disciples opposed him and even some of the friendly Asiarchs cautioned him against assuming such a risk. The whole assembled company was an unruly mob, the great majority, perhaps, did not know what they had come for. Then the Jews put forward one of their orators to address the mob, one Alexander. But he could not bring in a word. He was known as a Jew, and the Jews hated idolatry. For two hours the wild cry of the demonized multitude continued, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Then the town clerk appeared. He settled the whole question in a very diplomatic way. First he stated the popular superstition that the image of Artemis fell down from Jupiter. Then he exhorted them to quiet-

ness, and after some sound advice and showing the danger that the superior Roman officers might hold them responsible for their riotous behavior, he dismissed the assembly.* What might have happened if Paul had gone in person to the theatre may only be guessed at. God in His mercy shielded his servants, and the Devil was completely defeated in his efforts. In the beginning of the next chapter, we find the Apostles once more in Macedonia and Achaia.

*The Greek for assembly is *ecclesia*, "the outcalled ones." This word is also used for the church. The ecclesia "of the Ephesian mob was called out by the silversmiths." The "ecclesia" of "the Lord Jesus Christ is called out by the Holy Spirit."

CHAPTER XX.

With this chapter we follow the Apostle in his eventful journey to Jerusalem. We divide the chapter into four parts.

I. **Paul in Macedonia** (Verses 1–2).

II. **His abode in Greece, the visit to Troas and what transpired there** (Verses 3–12).

III. **The journey from Troas to Miletus** (Verses 13–16).

IV. **The farewell to the Ephesian Elders** (Verses 17–38).

I. Paul in Macedonia.

> And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto *him* the disciples, and embraced *them*, and departed for to go into Macedonia. And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece. (Verses 1–2.)

The record before us is very brief. Some have thought the reason is the fact that the Apostle had turned aside from His given ministry and therefore the Holy Spirit had nothing to report. We do believe that this is correct. The object of the Spirit of God is now to lead us rapidly forward to the last visit of the Apostle to Jerusalem, therefore much is passed over in the untiring service and labors of the great Man of God. After the uproar was over in Ephesus Paul embraced the disciples and departed to go into Macedonia. It is the first farewell scene on this memorable journey. He must have visited Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea and perhaps other cities. Besides giving them much exhortation, he received their fellowship for the poor saints in Jerusalem. In this he was fulfilling the request which had been made at the council in Jerusalem. James,

Cephas and John had there asked Paul and Barnabas "that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do" (Gal. ii:10). From Macedonia Paul passed on into Greece (Achaia).

II. His abode in Greece, the visit to Troas and what transpired there.

> And *there* abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. And there accompanied him into Asia, Sopater of Beroea, *the son* of Pyrrhus; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. These going before tarried for us at Troas. And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow: and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him* said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken the bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted. (Verses 3–12.)

Three months were spent by him in Achaia, but we hear nothing of his labors there. Corinth was the place where he tarried. The Jews, who well remembered the defeat before Gallio, the deputy of Achaia (xviii:12), laid in wait for him as he was about to sail across to Syria. The plot was aimed at Paul's life, which most likely had been planned to be accomplished on board of ship, he intended to take from the port of Corinth, Cenchrea. Instead of sailing from there, he returned to Macedonia. Seven

brethren accompanied him, and went before into Asia to wait at Troas for Paul and Luke. Sopater (the same as in Rom. xvi:21), was of Beroea. Two were from the assembly in Thessalonica, Aristarchus and Secundus, Gaius was from Derbe, Timothy and the two of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. The last-named was left sick in Miletus (2 Tim. iv:20).

From the little word "we" in verse 6, we learn that Luke, the beloved physician, and the penman, used by the Holy Spirit to write this book, joined the Apostle. He had not been with Paul for about seven years. The last "we" was found in Philippi (Acts xvi:16) and here in Philippi it is used again. It is more than probable that Luke spent the greater part of his time in that city.

After a brief stay in Philippi and a five days' voyage, they came to Troas, where they found that the other brethren had arrived before them. In Troas the whole company tarried for seven days. Here something occurred which is of interest and importance. In verse 7 we find a description of how the disciples there kept the first day of the week. We have here the fact stated that the disciples including the apostolic company, came together on the first day of the week. This is the blessed day, which followed the Sabbath, the day on which our ever-blessed Lord rose from the dead, the day on which He manifested Himself to His disciples and appeared in their midst (John xx:19). For this reason the first day of the week is called "the Lord's day" (Rev. i:10). And it is right that we call the day of New Testament worship not Sabbath, for it is not the Sabbath; the Sabbath is the seventh day and if we were under the law, we would be obliged to keep that day in the strictest way. Nor should we call the day "Sunday," for it is named after the Sun god, but if we say "the Lord's day," we speak scripturally. It is a blessed day of privilege. And what glorious memories are connected with that day! If God's people are really in the Spirit, all the wonderful and blessed

truths and facts of our redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ crowd in upon the soul. The Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead on that day and this glorious truth points back to the cross, where He died, the Just for the unjust, and gave His life for a ransom for many. He is risen and lives; this directs the heart upward to the place of glory, where, at the right hand of God we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor. The blessed hope that we shall see Him as He is and be like Him, is closely connected with this. And these great facts and wonderful truths are the incentives and objects of true Christian worship.

And on the first day of the week the disciples in Troas came together. There was only one company. The sad division into sects and parties was then wholly unknown. But why did they gather together? Did the news that the Apostle Paul was in their midst bring them together? Did they come to hear the mighty man of God preach a great sermon? No. But we read that the disciples came together not a mixed multitude, but as disciples to break bread. This was their first object in the gathering on the first day of the week. The statement one meets occasionally that the breaking of bread meant that they had a meal together is so superficial and unwarranted that we need not to argue about it. The breaking of bread means the Lord's Supper. "Do this in remembrance of Me"—our blessed Lord had requested His disciples, and this request was re-stated by the Apostle Paul. In 1 Cor. xi:23–26, we read:

> For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remem-

brance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.

He had received this of the Lord, no doubt in a direct revelation, and he delivered it as His message to the churches. That blessed memorial feast the Lord Jesus Christ instituted on the night He was betrayed is to be kept by His own redeemed people "till He comes." Can there be anything more precious than this? What is all service and sacrifice in service, in comparison with the response to His request ere He went to the cross, "do this in remembrance of Me"? What memories flood the soul when in the power of the Spirit of God this feast is kept! All the marvellous facts of our redemption are proclaimed at the Lord's table. His coming into the world, His death on the cross and the infinite worth of that death, what has been accomplished by it, the new and living way which has been made into the Holiest, His resurrection, His presence as Priest in glory, His coming again, all these and much more cluster around the Lord's table.

The question has often been raised, How often should the Lord's supper be kept? There is no command whatever about the frequency of the observance of this blessed ceremony. From Acts II we learned that in the beginning of the church it was kept daily. The Holy Spirit brought the Lord's request at once before the hearts of the company of believers and so strong was the love for the Lord that they remembered Him daily in the breaking of bread.

The passage before us carries with it the impression that it was the custom of the disciples to come together to remember the Lord on the first day of the week. The Lord's day and the Lord's supper belong together and there can be no doubt that the early church celebrated that feast of love each Lord's day.

If we had been present in Troas that Lord's day we would have witnessed a meeting of praise and worship. Af-

ter some disciple had given thanks for the bread and for the wine, these emblems of His great love were passed around among the gathered company.

After the breaking of bread was over, Paul preached unto them. However, the word preached must be changed to "discoursed." It was not the preaching of the Gospel to an unsaved company, for such had not gathered to remember the Lord. No unsaved person has a place at the Lord's table. Only believers being present, Paul addressed them. It has not pleased the Holy Spirit to report this discourse. Following the remembrance of the Lord what blessed truths must have been brought out by the great Apostle! The address was not like the modern day "sermonette" of fifteen or twenty minutes: "he continued his speech until midnight."

The meeting place was an upper chamber and many lights were burning. All at once a young man, Eutychus, fell down from the third loft and was taken up dead. He sat in a window and had fallen in a deep sleep till he fell from that height to the ground. Through Paul's embrace he was raised to life. Life had not gone out of the body and Paul declared that his life (soul) was in him. The functions of life were restored and the bonds between soul and body were re-established. The incident has been much used in an allegorical way. Some see in Eutychus the type of a believer who has fallen asleep spiritually and fallen, and who is restored. Others read the history of the church in this event.

Paul then partook of the bread (which in verse 11 means the simple eating of bread and no longer the Lord's supper) and talked a long while, till the day dawned, when he departed.

III. The Journey from Troas to Miletus.

And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself

to go afoot. And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. And we sailed thence, and came the next *day* over against Chios; and the next *day* we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next *day* we came to Miletus. For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. (Verses 13–16.)

The company then took ship to sail to Assos, but Paul made the journey of over 20 miles on foot. He wanted to be alone like Elijah as well as others. What thoughts must have passed through his mind! What burdens must have been upon his heart! What anxieties in connection with that coming visit to Jerusalem!

No doubt as he walked along, he stepped along in prayer in communion with the Lord, unhindered and undisturbed by his fellow laborers. How well it is if we follow his example and the examples of all the other great men of God, above all the example of our Lord, and be alone, alone with God. "For us this is often a wise thing. To be alone, apart from men, but alone with God, where we can think of Him, of ourselves and of the work as He sees it. Alone—where in His presence responsibility is felt, instead of activity before men. This communion with Him, as His servants, gives and sustains a blessed confidence in Him, an intimacy of soul with Him, full of goodness and of grace."

And how the heart of the child of God yearns for such an intimacy with God! The enemy of our souls ever tries to keep us from this. Well it is if we tear ourselves loose from our choicest friends and fellowship of saints and service, to seek His presence, to be alone.

They took him in at Assos, which they reached before the Apostle had arrived. Nothing but the route is here described. Ephesus looms up. But it seemed impossible for the hurrying Apostle, who was determined to reach Jerusalem at Pentecost, to visit the beloved city. When

Miletus was reached he was but thirty miles from Ephesus.

IV. Paul's address to the Elders of Ephesus.

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church. The remaining part of this chapter contains his great farewell address to the Ephesian elders and through them to the church located there. Two great speeches by the Apostle have so far been reported in this book. The first was addressed to the *Jews* in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts xiii:16-41). The second was addressed to the *Gentiles* in Athens (chapter xvii). The address here in our chapter is to the *church*. It is of very great and unusual interest and importance. He speaks of himself, his own integrity and recalls to them his ministry. He declares his own coming sufferings and his determination not to count his life dear, but to finish his course with joy. He warns the church concerning the future apostasy and the appearance in their midst of false teachers. But we must study the great address in detail.

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no

more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship. (Verses 17–38.)

The entire address contains the characteristic phrases so generally employed by the apostle. These phrases used by Paul or in connection with him are often found in the Book of Acts: "*Lying in wait*, or *plots* (ix:24, xx:3, xxiii:30); *house to house* (viii:3); *faith in the Lord Jesus* (xxiv:24, xxvi:18); *and now behold* (xiii:11); *bound in the spirit* (xix:21); *afflictions* (xiv:22); *course* (xiii:25); *I am pure* (xviii:6); *the counsel of God* (xiii:36); *appointed* (xix:21); *perverse* (xiii:8, 10); *the Word of His Grace* (xiv:3). Compare 1 Thess. i:5, 9 with verse 18 in this chapter. *Serving the Lord* (Rom. xii:11); *humility of mind* (Col. ii:18): *tears* (2 Cor. ii:4); *profitable* (1 Cor. x:23); *Jews and Greeks* (Rom. i:16); *finish my course* (Phil. iii:12, 2 Tim. iv:7); *ministry which I received* (Col. iv:17, Rom. i:5, Eph. iii:7, Col. i:23,

25, 1 Tim. i:12); *from the Lord* (Gal. i:12, 1 Cor. ix:23); *see my face* (Col. ii:1); *admonish* (Rom. xv:14, Col. i:28, iii:16); *covet* (Rom. vii:7), *these hands ministered* (1 Cor. iv:12, 1 Thess. ii:9, 2 Thess. iii 8), *laboring* (1 Thess. v:12, 1 Tim. v:17), *help the weak* (1 Thess. v:14, 1 Cor. xii:28), *remember* (Gal. ii:10, Eph. ii:2, Col. iv:18, etc.)."

How many elders (*presbyters*) had come to Miletus is not stated. Their office and their work is given in verse 28. They are overseers (*episcopi*), and the Holy Spirit appointed them to feed the church of God. Ritualistic churches claim that the office of a presbyter and a bishop, an overseer, are distinct; but such a distinction which is claimed does not exist. It is also incorrect to say that because there are no more Apostles, there can be no more elders. This is as erroneous as if one would say the gifts of evangelists, pastors and teachers have ceased.

The word "bishop"—overseer describes the work of an elder—the word "presbyter" an elder, that is one mature in years and experience, not a novice (1 Tim. iii:6).

As long as the true church is on earth these gifts and elders are also in existence and they must be recognized.

The address of the Apostle Paul falls into four parts: 1. A rehearsal of his integrity and faithfulness in ministry (Verses 19–21). 2. The announcement of his anticipated sufferings and his determination to endure (Verses 22–27). 3. The charge to the elders and the warning (Verses 28–31). 4. The final word (Verses 32–35).

1. First then we find a rehearsal of his integrity and faithfulness in his ministry. On account of the prominence given to himself and his labours the Apostle Paul has been charged with egotism and that his address was not spoken by inspiration. Such, however, is not the case at all. One might just as well charge the Apostle with egotism in writing his different epistles in which the personal element is often so predominant. The fact is that God has been pleased

to make this great man a pattern in every way. When he refers thus to himself he was led by the Holy Spirit to manifest the Grace of God in his own life as a devoted servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had arrived in Ephesus in the spring of 51 just four years previous. He was among them, as he loved to call himself, as the slave of the Lord, serving Him. And how he served the Lord! These things he mentioned. With all humility of mind. From 2 Cor. x:1 and verse 10 we learn that his bodily presence was unattractive and base. Paired with an humble bodily appearing was humble-mindedness. "Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii:15), thus he wrote by the Holy Spirit and the life of Christ had produced this very mind, the leading characteristic of which is humility, in the great Apostle. He mentions the many *tears*, with which he was amongst them. Our beloved Apostle was a man of many tears; he wept much and watered the seed with his tears. The affection and anguish of his heart brought forth tears and under such deep exercise he wrote his epistles. "I wrote unto you with many tears" (2 Cor. ii:4). Of the enemies of the cross of Christ he spoke with weeping (Phil. iii:18). And he also served among them surrounded with *temptations* and *dangers*. How few such servants we find in our present days! Men are called great servants if they can organize great campaigns, reach thousands, address constantly large audiences and make a great name for themselves and have their photographs exhibited as often as possible. This is man's pattern of a great servant. But here we have a servant of Christ, who is after God's own heart. Serving in humble-mindedness, not seeking great things, serving in love with many tears and in many trials.

In his ministry he was as faithful as he was Christ-like in his character. *He kept nothing back*. He had not shunned to declare all the counsel of God. The many who profess

to be preachers and teachers in our own times and who shun to declare all the counsel of God and keep back certain truths are not the servants of Christ, but they are man-pleasers. And elsewhere the Apostle says, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. i:10). How often this is done. The second Coming of Christ for the establishment of His Kingdom and the other great prophetic unfoldings connected with this event are often set aside and kept back, though they are an important part of the counsel of God.

Then he did not confine his ministry to a sermon on Lord's day during the years of his presence in Ephesus, but publicly and from *house to house* he had labored. Nor did he confine his ministry to a certain class of people. He testified to the Jews and to the Greeks repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Both repentance and faith belong together and are inseparably connected. He preached and taught that Jews and Gentiles were lost and have to take their true places as sinners before God, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Gospel is preached, and faith by hearing cometh to the heart, true repentance will be the result.

2. In the second place we find the announcement of his anticipated sufferings and his determination to endure. Dark forebodings are filling his mind. Going unto Jerusalem he is bound in the spirit, which does not mean the Holy Spirit, but his own spirit. The future is dark for him as no revelation has reached him what is to be his fate. But at the same time the Holy Spirit bore witness in every city that bonds and afflictions were in store for him. And yet he pushes on towards Jerusalem. With all the uncertainty about what is to come he possesses the certainty that the beloved saints of Ephesus were to see his face no more. Was he in the Lord's will when he went on in this way in spite of the Holy Spirit's warning? Cer-

tainly not. But his whole soul must have been filled with a consuming love and burning desire for his kinsmen, his brethren in Jerusalem. What then if bonds and afflictions were to come upon him? What if he were to share in the city of his fathers some of the sufferings of Christ? His heart longed for "the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto His death." And later he could write, "I am now ready to be offered." It is the triumph of faith which breathes in verse 24 of our chapter. Though he had gone on his way in self-will, yet in faith he could say, "but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." Words of faith these are. And faithfully he had labored preaching both the Gospel of Grace and the Kingdom of God, not shrinking from declaring all the counsel of God and therefore he was pure from the blood of all. He had preached the truth in its fulness and completeness and with that the responsibility of the servant ends; but the servant of Christ who does not declare all the counsel of God has a fearful responsibility. Well has one said, there are three kinds of servants: a good Christian and a good workman, such as Paul; a good Christian and a bad workman, himself saved, but his work to be consumed; then he who seeks to corrupt and destroy the temple of God, whose work as well as himself shall perish. And such evil workmen were even then in existence seeking to corrupt the faith. As long as Paul was in the world his spiritual energy resisted and overcame these evil things. What should come after his departure he makes known by the Spirit of God in the third part of his address.

3. The charge to the Elders and the Warning. It is a solemn charge the Apostle now delivers. At the same time it is full of instructions. As overseers they were charged with

taking heed first unto themselves. Later Paul wrote to Timothy, then in Ephesus, take heed to thyself, and to the doctrine. Only in this way could they discharge their solemn responsibility. The flock is mentioned, meaning the sheep of Christ and the Church of God, to which all the sheep of Christ belong, and over these the elders were overseers and called to feed the church. It is a significant expression—"the church of God, which he hath purchased with His own blood." Here the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the spotless Lamb, is called "His own blood, the blood of God." How great the cost-price! It was God Himself in His Son, one with Him, who accomplished the work. If we but could think of all those, no matter where they are, redeemed and saved by grace, as the flock and as the assembly of God, which He who is God purchased with His blood, what love and graciousness would energize us and what deep concern we would have towards all!

And then the reason is given why they should take such heed. Verses 29 and 30 contain a prophecy. The Apostle speaks concerning his departure and he does not mention anyone to take his place. All the talk among Ritualists of apostolic succession is a pure invention and worse. The warning is concerning grievous wolves who would enter in among the flock, and concerning false teachers who were to arise in their own midst, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. How abundantly this great prediction has been verified. And never before has it been so evident as now. Wolves in sheep-clothing, with the most damnable heresies like Millennial Dawnism and Christian Science have entered the flock, while from within false leaders have arisen, who propagate the work of Alexander, Hymenaeus and Philetus (1 Tim. i:20; 2 Tim. ii:17), and divide the flock. Failure soon appears after God has begun a work. Thus it has been in the

past and is so now and will continue till the enemy of God, who stands behind the wolves and the false teachers, is bound. And all this stamps the teaching that the church increases in power and righteousness and leads on towards world-conversion as an untruth. Paul made no such prediction for the church on earth. The truth is that that which lays claim to increased power and expansion is the apostate thing which long ago has abandoned sound doctrine.

4. The final word. In his final word he commends them to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build up the individual believer and to give them an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. And blessed be His Name, whatever the apostasy brings, how grievous the wolves may be, how subtle the false teachers with their perverted theories, God and the Word of His Grace abide! Nothing can touch these, and that Word can build us up and will build us up. It is the great minister to the need of our souls, and whenever we turn to it we shall find our need supplied, our faith strengthened, and our spiritual lives quickened. A blessed word to remember in these days—"I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up." In the dark days of failure and increasing departure from God, no child of God needs to be in want. Now, more than ever, we may sing, "My cup runneth over."

Another personal testimony of this pattern servant of Christ follows. He had coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. He must have held up his hands, when he said, "Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." And as they looked upon his hands they saw hands roughened by much toil. In this he had given them an object lesson, that they, too, should support the weak, and that they should remember the words of the Lord Jesus, so beautifully illustrated in the Apostle's toil—"it is more blessed to give than to receive."

This lesson was specially needed in Ephesus where in the heathen worship of Artemis the ministers of the cult obtained great wealth. What a contrast between the luxuriously living, wealth-accumulating priests and temple-servants of the temple of Artemis (Diana) and the humble servant of the Lord, toiling with his own hands! And how this lesson, too, is needed at the present time. The most blessed work on earth, preaching the Gospel and teaching the Word, has been reduced to a profession with a certain income and with fees for service. Charging for such service, which tells out God's unspeakable gift and unfathomable love, is foreign to the teaching of the New Testament. The servant is cast in dependence on his Lord, whom he serves and He will sustain him in all his service. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."* He had declared and the true servant of Christ is called upon to share the blessedness of His Lord by spending and being spent, by giving, and helping the weak. A blessed path it is, and blessed, too, because the servant but experiences what a gracious Lord it is whom he serves, who is mindful of him and abundantly supplies all his needs.

An affecting farewell scene closes this chapter. He kneeled down and led in prayer. What a prayer it must have been! What an outpouring of the heart in God's presence! They all wept and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him. Their greatest sorrow was that they had heard him say they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

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*One of the beatitudes which circulated in the early church apart from those preserved in the Gospels. Being embodied in Acts this one is proven to be genuine.

CHAPTER XXI.

The final stages of the journey of the Apostle Paul and his companions to Jerusalem, and what befell him there, are the contents of this interesting chapter.

I. The journey from Miletus to Tyre and Ptolemais (Verses 1–7).

II. In Cesarea (Verses 8–14).

III. The Apostle's Arrival in Jerusalem and his visit to the Temple (Verses 15–26).

IV. The Uproar in the Temple. Paul taken prisoner (Verses 27–40).

I. The Journey from Miletus to Tyre and Ptolemais.

> And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth. Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden. And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again. And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. (Verses 1–7.)

Little needs to be said on the journey itself, for the Holy Spirit gives no record of anything which took place, save

the repeated warnings He gave to the Apostle, who in the strongest determination was hastening to reach the chosen goal, Jerusalem. Coos, Rhodes and Patara are mentioned, and from there they took ship to Phenicia. The landing place in that ancient country was Tyre, where some of the cargo was to be put ashore, and perhaps an additional one was taken aboard, for the destination of the ship was Ptolemais. In Tyre they found a company of disciples and tarried there for seven days. This rather lengthy stay may have been by request of the Apostle, so that they might be enabled to spend a Lord's day with the assembly in Tyre. In Troas (chapter xx:6) they also had tarried seven days, and on the first day of the week, as we learned from that chapter, they were engaged in the breaking of bread, remembering the Lord in gathering around His table. Though no statement is made about the Apostle meeting with the believers in Tyre for the same blessed purpose, we can take it for granted that such was the case.

And the Holy Spirit through these disciples warned the Apostle at once that he should not go to Jerusalem. This indeed, was very solemn. If these disciples had spoken of themselves, if it said that they were in anxiety over Paul's journey to that city, one might say that they were simply speaking as men, but the record makes it clear that the *Holy Spirit* spoke through them. Could then the Apostle Paul have been under the guidance of that same Spirit in going to Jerusalem? As stated before, the great love for his brethren, his kinsmen, burned in his heart, and so great was his desire to be in Jerusalem that he ignored the voice of the Spirit. The answer which the Apostle gave to their inspired warning is not given, but we know that he did not swerve from his purpose.

Beautiful is the farewell scene in connection with this visit. It even surpasses the farewell of the previous chapter. "And they all brought us on our way, with wives and

children," writes the penman, "till we were out of the city; and we kneeled down on the shore and prayed." It is a sweet picture of love. Even the children came along to get the last glimpse of the great man of God, who had tarried in their midst. And what a prayer-meeting it must have been, there on the seashore!

In Ptolemais, which they reached next, the brethren were saluted by them, and they spent one day in their company.

II. In Cesarea.

> And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Cesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. (Verses 8–14.)

The journey from Ptolemais to Cesarea was probably made on foot. When they arrived in that city, they found a welcome in the house of one whose name is familiar from the earlier chapters of our book. They entered the house of Philip. As there also was an apostle by the name of Philip (Matthew x:3), the Holy Spirit tells us that it was not the Apostle Philip, but Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven (Acts vi:5).

We had his history and great activity before. The last we read of him was at the close of Chapter viii. After he had been so blessedly used in the conversion of the eunuch,

and had been caught away by the Spirit, he was found "at Azotus, and passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea." Here we find him again twenty years later, settled in Cesarea, with his family. His gift as an Evangelist, no doubt, he exercised throughout all these years. There is no record given of the blessed activity of this servant of the Lord, but in that coming day his labor and the blessed results of this great Evangelist will be manifested, as shall be all the works of the Saints of God.

Special mention is made of the four unmarried daughters of Philip, who had the gift of prophecy. This has puzzled some, because elsewhere it is stated—"a woman suffer not to teach," and that women should be silent in the assembly. It has therefore been stated by some, who press this point in a dogmatic way, that these four virgins had their connection with the Jewish and earthly kingdom. But this is far-fetched. Woman is *not* excluded from the gifts of the Spirit; the exercise of woman's gift, however, is according to the sphere given to her by God. These four daughters possessed the gift of prophesying, and of teaching, and they also made use of the gift. But did they preach and teach in public? Certainly not. If they exercised their gift it must have been in their sphere, that is, in their home, the house of their father. And when Paul and his companions appeared, nothing is said that these virgins made use of the gift in the presence of these visitors. This in itself is very striking. We desire to quote what another has said on this interesting and timely question:* "There is no reason why a woman should not have this or most other gifts as much as a man. I do not say the same kind of gift always. Surely God is wise and gives suited gifts whether to men or women, or, it may be, I was going to say, to children. The Lord is Sovereign, and knows how, as putting all who now believe in the body

*W. Kelly Introductory Lectures to the Acts, page 145.

of Christ, so also to give them a work suitable to the purposes of His own grace. Certainly He did clothe these four daughters of Philip with a very special spiritual power. They had one of the highest characters of spiritual gift—they prophesied. And if they were invested with this power, certainly it was not to be put under a bushel, but to be exercised, the only question is, how.

"Now Scripture, if we but be subject, is quite explicit as to this. In the first place, prophecy stands confessedly in the highest rank of teaching. It is teaching. Next, the Apostle himself is the person who tells us that he does not suffer a woman to teach. This is clearly decisive; if we bow to the Apostle as inspired to give us God's mind, we ought to know that it is not the place of a Christian woman to teach. He is speaking on this topic, not in 1 Cor. xi, but in Chapter xiv. He is drawing the line between men and women in 1 Tim. ii. The latter epistle forbids the women *as a class* to teach. The other and still closer word in the former epistle, commands them to be silent in the assembly. At Corinth, apparently, there was some difficulty as to godly order and the right relations of men and women, because the Corinthians, being a people of speculative habits, instead of believing, reasoned about things. It was the tendency of the Greek mind to question everything. They could not understand that, if God had given a woman as good a gift as a man, she was not equally to use it. We can all feel their difficulty. Such reasoners are not wanting now. The fault of it all was, and is, that God is left out. His will was not in the thought of the Corinthians. There was no waiting on the Lord to ascertain what was His mind. Clearly, if He has called the church into being, it cannot but be made for His own glory. He has His own mind and will about the church and He has therefore spread out in His Word how all the gifts of His grace are to be exercised."

"Now the passages in 1 Cor. xiv and in 1 Tim. ii, appear

to me to be perfectly plain as to the relative place of the woman, whatever may be her gift. This may be said to decide only as to one sphere—the assembly—where the woman, according to Scripture, is precluded from the exercise of her gift. I may say further, that in those days it did not occur to them that women should go forth publicly to preach the Word. Bad as the state of things was in early days, they seem to me to have looked for a greater sense of modesty on the part of women. There is not the slightest doubt that many females with the best intentions have thus preached, as they do still. They, or their friends, defend their cause by appeals to the blessing of God on the one hand, and on the other, to the crying need of perishing sinners everywhere. But nothing can be more certain than that Scripture (and this is the standard) leaves them without the slightest warrant from the Lord for their line of conduct. Public preaching of the Gospel on the part of women is never contemplated in Scripture. It was bad enough for the Corinthians to think that they might speak among the faithful. It might have seemed that in the assembly women had the shelter of godly men; that there they were not offensively putting themselves forward before all sorts of people in the world, as must be the case in evangelizing. Among the godly they may have imagined a veil, so to speak, drawn over them, more or less. But in modern times the end is supposed to justify the means, Gross as the Corinthians were, I must confess that to my mind the plans of our own day seem even more grievous, and with less excuse for them."*

Another one appears, whose name is known to us from the previous record. Agabus, one who had likewise a gift

*The so-called "Pentecostal people" and other "Holiness sects" ignore the divine injunctions completely, besides teaching positive error like the eradication of the old nature in the believer. Surely the Holy Spirit cannot be there in His fulness, as they claim.

of prophecy, came down from Judea. In chapter xi:27 he stood up and announced that there should be a great dearth. He made this prediction by the Spirit and it of course came true. When he had come he took Paul's girdle and with it bound his own hands and feet and then he said: "Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Here then another warning was given. It was the last and by far the strongest. Did Agabus really speak by the Spirit? The literal fulfilment of his predictive action furnishes the answer. The whole company, both his fellow travellers and the believers in Cesarea began to beseech him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then came Paul's final declaration: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." One cannot but admire the wonderful determination and whole-hearted devotion which breathe in these words of the Apostle. He had indeed set his face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem, whatever the cost might be. And if the Holy Spirit had so solemnly warned him, and he rejected these warnings, the Lord in His own gracious way over-ruled it all to His own glory and to foreshadow what might be termed "the captivity of the Gospel." God permitted it all for His own wise purpose. He knows the end from the beginning. The blessed Gospel of the Grace and Glory of God committed to the Apostle Paul was soon to be set aside by man and the judaistic form, that perverted Gospel, to gain the victory. And Paul himself arrested in Jerusalem given over into the hands of the Gentiles and sent to Rome.

"The will of the Lord be done" was the last word spoken before He went up to Jerusalem. And a blessed word it is to remember. The will of the Lord will be accomplished in the lives of His people in spite of all their failures.

The whole path of all His people is marked out by Himself. What calm it brings to our troubled hearts if we but remember it always!

III. The Apostle's Arrival in Jerusalem and His Visit to the Temple.

> And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Cesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are zealous of the law: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Then take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. As touching the Gentiles which we believe, we have written *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. (Verses 15–26.)

It was immediately after those days spent in Cesarea that the Apostle and his companions went up to Jerusalem. As it was before one of the great feasts of Judaism, the road from Cesarea to the City of Jerusalem must have presented a lively picture as large numbers of Jews went

up to the feast. Disciples of Cesarea accompanied them, and, as it was almost 70 miles to Jerusalem, the journey had to be made in two days. So they had to lodge in the house of Mnason a Cyprian one of the early disciples. The correct translation is—"there went with us also some of the disciples from Cesarea, to bring us to one Mnason, a Cyprian, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge." Nothing else is reported of this last stage of the journey to Jerusalem. When they reached their destination at last, they were heartily welcomed by the brethren. With what feeling must the Apostle Paul have entered once more the city of his fathers, which he was to leave as a prisoner! Great are the events, which subsequently took place.

On the day following the company paid a visit to James in whose house all the elders had assembled for the purpose of meeting with Paul and his friends. No doubt they were well informed of his purposed visit to Jerusalem. Where were the apostles? They are not mentioned at all in this account; from which we may conclude that they were absent. And now once more the Apostle relates, what no doubt was dearest to the hearts of James and the elders, what God had wrought through His God-given ministry among the Gentiles. It must have been a very lengthy account; for he rehearsed particularly, "or one by one" the things, which had happened in His great activity. James, however, does not seem to be the spokesman here as he was in the meeting in chapter xv. After Paul had spoken, "they glorified God."

All had progressed nicely up to this point. But now the great crisis is rapidly reached. The meeting had been called in the house of James, and only the elders had been invited for a very good reason. Reports had reached Jerusalem that Paul had taught the Jews among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and even to deny children the cove-

nant sign, circumcision. Most likely the Judaizing element in the assembly of Jerusalem, the men who were so successfully overcome by the bold arguments of the Apostle at the council in Jerusalem (Acts xv., Gal. ii), the men who so strenuously taught, that unless the Gentiles became circumcised, they could not be saved—these men were responsible for the rumors. What could be done to convince the multitude that all this was incorrect, that Paul after all was a good Jew? The church in Jerusalem had become strong; its membership numbered myriads (literal translation). But they were in a transition period. They had accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet they held on to the law of Moses. They were all zealous for the Law. They kept all the ordinances of the Law, abstained from certain meats, kept the feast days, went to the temple, made vows, and purified themselves. If this great multitude comes together, say the elders to Paul, they will hear of his arrival. With the accusations made against the Apostle, a great disorder could not be avoided. To discover some way to solve the difficulty and avert the danger, the meeting had assembled in the house of James.

Now the rumors about Paul were indeed true. He had preached the Gospel as it had been given to him by the risen Christ. In that Gospel the law could not be recognized. He had taught the position of the believer in Christ and as such the believing Jew was free from the law. The Epistle to the Romans had been written by him through the Spirit of God several years before. And yet the Lord in His patience had borne with these conditions, which prevailed in Jerusalem.

The fullest teaching on the break which had to come between Christianity and Judaism had not yet been given. The Epistle to the Hebrews furnished this argument and contains the solemn warning of the grave danger of apostasy from the Gospel by clinging to the shadow-things,

which are past. To go outside of the camp and bear His reproach is the great exhortation given in that Epistle to these Jewish Christians. No doubt the Apostle Paul wrote that Epistle to his beloved brethren in Jerusalem. His heart was filled with love towards them. In his own soul he knew that all the commands of the law and the law itself had been abolished by the death of Christ. The ordinances had been nailed to the cross. The Holy Spirit foreseeing what would happen had warned him, as we have seen, not to go to Jerusalem. He went to the city and with this he stepped upon dangerous ground. He had left the way into which God had called him, and though it was his all-consuming love for his own brethren which was the motive, he became ensnared by the enemy.

The elders suggest to him that there were four men who had a vow on them. These he should take and purify himself with them as well as pay the charges. This action, they reasoned, would not only demonstrate that the reports were untrue, but that he, the Apostle of Gentiles "walketh orderly and keepeth the law." To make this temptation stronger, they re-stated that which had been agreed concerning the status of the believing Gentiles, according to the decision of the church council years ago. All was a most subtle snare. He was by that action to show that, with all his preaching to the Gentiles, he was still a good Jew, faithful to all the traditions of the fathers, and attached to the temple.

Without entering into an examination of what the vow was, and the purifying and offering connected with it, we see the Apostle falling into the snare. He did, as far as the record goes, without a moment's hesitation accept the suggestion of the elders, and for a number of days we see him a visitor to the temple conforming to the customs of the law. Where was prayer and direction from the

Lord? Alas, he had gone his own way against the warning voices of the Holy Spirit!

And a strange sight it is to see the Apostle Paul back in the temple, going through these dead ceremonies, which had been ended by the death of the cross. A strange sight to see him, who disclaimed all earthly authority and taught deliverance from the law and a union with an unseen Christ, submitting once more to the elementary things, as he calls them in his Epistle to the Galatians "the beggarly elements"! And has not the whole professing church fallen into the same snare? What the results of this subtle and evil advice were we shall find in the next paragraph.

IV. The Uproar in the Temple. Paul Taken Prisoner.

And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all *men* everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him. And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar,

and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? But Paul said, I am a man *which am* a Jew of Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* in the Hebrew tongue. (Verses 27–40.)

The seven days connected with the vow of these men were almost ended when the Jews, which were in Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up all the people and laid hands on him. In all probability Paul was not known to many people in Jerusalem. The Jews who lived in the city may not have known him at all by sight. But the city was filled with many Jews from Asia, that is the province of Asia, and as Ephesian Jews had come to Jerusalem for the feast, he did not escape their notice. They hated him and as they recognized him, they watched him closely and awaited their opportunity to do him harm. He was recognized in the city when a well known Gentile Ephesian, Trophimus, was in his company. They supposed that the Apostle had brought this Gentile Christian in the temple.

The outer court of the temple, which was called the Court of the Gentiles, was open to everybody. Then there was an inner court, which was known by the name of the Court of Israel. This court was separated from the outer court by the middle wall of partition. There were barriers and pillars with inscriptions in Greek and Latin, warning strangers under the penalty of death not to advance into that holy court. Inside the barrier was a high wall, which surrounded the inner court, and in this wall were doors (Verse 30). The eastern part of the Court was reserved for women; then a colonnade ran around the Court of the women: in its angles were chambers. One of these was called the House of the Nazarites, where the Nazarites boiled the peace offerings, shaved their heads, and burnt the

hair. Here most likely the Jews from Asia discovered the despised and hated Apostle. Now their hour had come to carry out the satanic desire of putting the Apostle out of the way. So they held him; then with a characteristic phrase—"Men of Israel," they cried for help and shouted out their accusation—"This is the man that teacheth everywhere all men against the people (the Jews), and the law, and this place." This language reminds us of what we read in connection with Stephen, he too had been accused by the Jews in a similar manner. Perhaps in that very moment it all came back to the memory of Paul, for he was present when Stephen stood up to answer the accusations. And even then the words of the Lord, as the Jews seized hold on him, may have come into Paul's heart: "I will shew him what great things he must suffer for my Name's sake." He had great trials in the past, but now he stood on the threshold of still greater sufferings. But the chief reason these Jews of Asia gave for laying hold on Paul was a false accusation. They charged him of having polluted the temple by bringing Greeks, uncircumcised Gentiles, into that holy place. They had seen him with Trophimus, and took it for granted that Trophimus, and perhaps other Greeks, had followed him into the temple.

A fearful scene followed. The news spread like wildfire. It spread in a very few minutes throughout the temple courts, and to the crowds outside, and with their shoutings and gesticulations they soon attracted others, till the whole city was in an uproar. The name of Paul and temple pollution must have been shouted in every direction. Perhaps some of the older Jews may have even then remembered him as Saul the Pharisee, who so many years ago had been such a prominent figure in Jerusalem. And a great crime it was to defile the temple. Stoning according to their law was the penalty, and that fate seemed to be imminent for Paul. They dragged him out of the

temple and the temple guard closed the doors. Then they fell upon him.

They did not dare to stone him in the place where he was; the place outside of the city was reserved for that. So to avoid another pollution of the temple, they began to beat him. They were endeavoring to kill him.

But God watched over His servant. His life was not in the hands of the mob but in the Lord's own hands, and such is the case with all His people. In connection with the temple buildings was a castle, known by the name, "the fortress of Antonia." It was built upon a very steep rock and connected with the buildings below by stairs. This fortress was occupied by a Roman company of soldiers, a cohort with a chief captain (Greek: Chiliarch, commander of a thousand men). The great disturbance in the courts below attracted at once the attention of this officer and he rushed his men to the scene. With soldiers and centurions he came down the stairs, and their appearance brought the beating of Paul to an end.

And the next thing! Two chains are put about the Apostle. Agabus' prophecy is fulfilled. He is a captive now, "the prisoner of the Lord," as later he called himself. Taking the advice of the elders to appease the displeasure of the zealous law-keeping Hebrew Christians, and trying to show that he was a good law-keeping Jew, had led him into this place where he now finds himself.

It was all failure from beginning to end. The object was not reached. And now his great heart filled with love for his brethren, had to begin to learn the sad lesson what the Lord told him—"they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." As the chains were put up on him, bruised and bleeding, may it then not have dawned upon him that his love for his Jewish brethren had led him in a way which was not the Lord's way?

It is a blessed study to compare the sufferings of Paul,

the treatment he received from his brethren according to the flesh, his behavior, with that which happened to the Lord Himself in the days of His flesh. There is a correspondence and it is quite marked. Such a comparison shows the creature weakness and imperfection in Paul, and the absolute perfection of Him who, as to His office work, was made perfect through suffering.

The transportation of Paul into the fortress, however, was beset with many difficulties. One cried this and the other that, as the chief captain asked what Paul had done and who he was. The multitude cried again and again, "Away with him,"—"Away with him,"—the word which reminds us of another multitude, who rejected the Prince of Life and delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles. So great was the crowd of people that Paul had to be lifted up by the soldiers in order to bring him by the stairway into the fortress on the rock. When about to be led into the castle, Paul addressed the chief captain in Greek. The captain was disappointed in this, for he thought he was a certain Egyptian, who had led four thousand murderers into the desert. Paul gives the Roman officer his pedigree. "I am a man, a Jew of Tarsus," and then requests the privilege of addressing the furious mob. This was permitted and taking a prominent place on the stairs, where he could be seen by all below, and when after beckoning to the people, silence had been secured, he addressed them in Hebrew. The break of the chapter at this point is unfortunate. The next chapter contains the first address of defence of the prisoner Paul.

CHAPTER XXII.

What a scene it was! On the stairs, midway between the temple court and the fortress, stood the Apostle in chains, his person showing the effects of the beating he had received. Around him were the well-armed Roman soldiers, and below the multitude with up-turned faces, still wildly gesticulating and only becoming more silent when they heard the first words from Paul's lips in the Hebrew tongue.* We find two sections in this chapter.

I. **The Address of the Apostle** (Verses 1–21).
II. **The Answer from the Mob, and Paul's Appeal to his Roman citizenship** (Verses 22–30).

I. The Address of the Apostle.

It is the first address in his defence recorded in this book, and his own person and experience is the theme. Seventeen times he uses the word "I," so that we have in his words a sketch of his life. All is well put and shows the great tact and wisdom of the Apostle. We find that the address contains three well-defined parts. He was not permitted to finish his autobiographical statements, but the mob interrupted him, as many years before Stephen's address was cut short.

1. **Paul's Account of himself as a Jew.** The accusation against him was "that he teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place." This now he tries to meet first of all by the evidence of his past Jewish life. The advice of the elders, too, finds an echo in the opening

*The Aramaic dialect, which was then universally used among the Jews.

words of his speech. They had told him that he should prove to the multitude that he walked orderly, keeping the law.

> Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence *which I make* now unto you. (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *and* taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. (Verses 1–5.)

It was a very wise and tactful utterance with which he began his defence. The crowd below which had used him so roughly and which was ready to murder him, he addressed as "Men, brethren and fathers." This was bound to secure at once their attention, as well as the use of their own language. But we may see in this conciliatory opening of his address an expression of his graciousness. The words which follow were spoken to show that he had had a true Jewish bringing up, and lived an exemplary Jewish life. First, he gives the fact of his birth outside of the land. Many were thus born and educated away from the homeland, but he was brought up in the City of Jerusalem, thereby showing that he belonged to a very zealous class of Jews, who cared for the religion and customs of the fathers. Furthermore, he had as teacher the great and well-known, as well as highly esteemed, Gamaliel. Gamaliel was a doctor of the Torah, the law, and a great leader of the strictest sect among the Jews, the Pharisees. So the speaker had become a Pharisee and had entered upon a life of the most scrupulous law-keeping as well as obedience to the traditions of the elders.

Next, he bears witness to his own zeal. He "was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day." One can only admire the tactful courtesy of the speaker. He not only spoke of his own zeal for God, but acknowledged the same in his hearers. With these words he even declared the wild scene in which he was so prominently concerned, an expression of their zeal for God. In Romans x:2 he had written: "For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

Next, he illustrates that zeal for God, which characterized his career as a Pharisee. Like the assembled mob he had been a persecutor. But he avoids speaking of those he persecuted by name. "I persecuted *this way* unto death." All, however, knew what he meant by the expression "this way;" it had for them the meaning of the new sect, which had arisen in Judaism. The same term is used by Paul in Chapter xxiv:14. And how had he persecuted this new way, the believers in Jesus? Unto death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. It was a confession of his persecuting zeal. The same confession we read in the beginning of the Epistle to the Galatians: "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it; and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. i:13–14). After he had thus briefly referred to the fact that he had been once energized by the same hatred against this way, he appealed to the ecclesiastical authorities as a witness. He referred to the letters, which so many years ago he had received, to persecute the believing Jews in Damascus, the letters which were never delivered by him. May there not have been a few among his hearers, who then remembered the young Pharisee of bygone days, Saul of Tarsus?

Then he begins a brief sketch of a second chapter in his eventful life.

2. **The Story of his Conversion.** The young Pharisee had disappeared suddenly from the scene, and his persecuting zeal had terminated abruptly. How then had it come about.

> And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*, came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Verses 6–16.)

The remarkable incident we have already followed in our exposition of the ninth chapter. However, some very interesting details are added here by himself, the former account being the inspired historical record written by Luke. First, we note that it was at noon when the wonderful vision flashed before his eyes. While in Chapter ix we read of a light that shined from heaven about him, here he tells us that it was a great light, and in Chapter xxvi:13 Paul informs us that it was "above the brightness of the sun." In the eleventh verse

of our chapter he speaks of it as "glory"; even so it was glory of the risen and ascended Son of God. In Acts ix we read that the voice of the Lord said to him, "I am Jesus," but here a more detailed account is given by Paul, and from it we learn that the Lord had said, "I am Jesus of Nazareth." As that worthy and blessed Name was mentioned by Paul, what dark and threatening looks must have met his gaze from the up-turned faces! And from his witness they learned that this same Jesus, whom they had rejected, is the Lord, and that He lives in the Glory. Of Ananias, Paul does not speak as a disciple at all, but he calls him "a devout man according to the law," who had a good report of all the Jews in Damascus. In all this we have an evidence of the wisdom of Paul. He also avoided the word "Christ," though all knew whom he meant when he speaks of "that Just One." Thus he briefly had described how the Lord, the rejected Jesus of Nazareth, had appeared unto him.*

3. **The Divine Commission.** He next touched upon another episode in his experience. The interesting account he gives here is not recorded n the ninth chapter.

> And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. (Verses 17–21.)

*Some have found a difficulty in the fact that here Paul saith that his companions saw the light and heard not the voice, which spake with him. In chapter ix the record states that they heard the voice. There is no discrepancy here. They did hear the voice, but were not able to understand the words which were spoken. They saw no one; only Paul saw the Lord.

Once more the Lord had appeared unto him, while praying in the temple when he was in a trance. In this same temple which stretched out before him, all this had taken place. And what an evidence to them of his sincere character that he had gone to the temple to offer up fervent prayers. He then repeats the words the Lord had spoken to him, "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." He himself now bound in chains, standing before the Jewish mob, was the living witness to the truth of these words. If he had but remembered those words and had followed completely the divine commission.

At that time his loving heart for his own people had prompted an answer. He told the Lord that he had a peculiar fitness to bear the testimony to his brethren in the beloved city. Did they not know that he had imprisoned and beaten those that believed in Him? When the blood of Stephen, the martyr, was shed, did he not stand by and consent unto his death, keeping the raiment of those that slew him? It is beautiful to read these simple words of the intimate conversation Paul carried on with the Lord. And he could tell the Lord all about his sins and hatred against Himself and His own, recount once more the bitter persecutions he had practised and the part he took in Stephen's death. Here we have a beautiful example of a conscience which has been purged, and knows that all is right. All this Paul relates to prove to them his sincerity as well as love for his kinsmen. The last word the Lord had spoken to him at that time was a word of commission: "Depart, for I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles." The Lord had therefore called him to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. His defence was complete. He had fully demonstrated that he accusation against him was false, that he loved his people and the Lord Himself had called him to go to the Gentiles.

II. The Answer from the Mob and Paul's Appeal to his Roman Citizenship.

> And they gave him audience unto this word, and *then* lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a *fellow* from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live. And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air, the chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him. And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man *is* a Roman. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free*-born. Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from *his* bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them. (Verses 22–30.)

They were impatient listeners, the storm broke with the word "Gentiles." Another great tumult resulted and the many voices demanded that such a fellow should not live. It was a scene of utmost confusion. All crying, gesticulating wildly, throwing dust in the air, one of the common occurrences when Orientals get excited; they cast off their outer garments to do so.

The chief captain seems to have been ignorant of the Aramaic dialect. He gave orders that Paul be now removed into the castle itself and be examined by scourging so that he might find out why they cried so against him. The torture was to be used to make him confess. He was led away, and everything made ready for the cruel treatment, when the prisoner spoke: "Is it lawful for you to scourge

a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" The centurion reported this to the chiliarch, the chief officer, who at once appeared on the scene. When he discovered that Paul was indeed a Roman by birth, a higher type of Roman citizenship than that which the chief captain had obtained by a great sum, they left their hands off of his person, and even the chiliarch was afraid. It was a highly illegal act to bind a Roman. Paul escaped the awful torture.

Not a few had pointed to this as a prominent failure in the career of the Apostle. According to these critics he made a grave mistake when he pleaded his Roman citizenship; he should have been silent and taken the unjust and cruel treatment without a murmur. If some of these harsh critics of the beloved Apostle were placed in the same condition, what would they do? As one has truly said: "It is easy to be a martyr in theory, and such are seldom martyrs in practice." He had a perfect right to tell the ignorant officers of the law who he was, and thus prevent a flagrant and cruel transgression of the law. And yet his conduct in Philippi was far different. Why did he not announce his Roman citizenship then? The power of the Spirit rested then upon him; it is different here. He is not acting in the liberty and peace of the Spirit, a fact which becomes more apparent in the next chapter, where we see him before the Sanhedrim.

CHAPTER XXIII.

In the last verse of the preceding chapter we read that the chief captain commanded that the chief priests and all the council should gather together. When this was accomplished, Paul was brought down and set before them. We divide the chapter into four sections:

I. **Paul before the Sanhedrim** (Verses 1–10).
II. **The vision of the Lord** (Verse 11).
III. **The conspiracy against Paul and its discovery.**
IV. **Paul taken to Cesarea** (Verses 23–30).

I. Paul before the Sanhedrim.

And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in

pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them and to bring *him* into the castle. (Verses 1–10.)

For the last time, the Jewish council is mentioned in this book. Three times before the Sanhedrim had been called together in connection with those who believed in the Lord Jesus (ii:5; v:21 and vi:12–15). Peter and John, the twelve Apostles and Stephen, had to appear before the Sanhedrim and now Paul had to stand in the presence of the same body. Looking straight at the council, Paul did not wait for the formalities connected with the proceedings, but addressed the gathered Sanhedrim as men and brethren. This action shows that he did not consider himself at all an accused criminal. And strange are the words with which he opened his defence: "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." In this he made a public declaration of his righteousness, which reminds us of his confession as a Pharisee (Phil. iii:4–6). This self-justification shows that he was not acting under the leading of the Holy Spirit. This bold language resulted in stirring up the anger of the high priest Ananias, who commanded that the bystanders should smite the Apostle on the mouth. And Paul was not slow to reply with a harsh word, calling the high priest "a whited wall" and demanding of God to smite him. No doubt the high priest was indeed a "whited wall" and fully deserved the judgment from God. But did Paul in speaking thus show the meekness of Him, whose servant he was? If Paul had been in the power of the Spirit and in the knowledge that he was doing the Lord's will, he would not have opened his mouth, nor acted in this hasty manner. However, the utterance he made was fulfilled, for some time later Ananias was assassinated. Paul recovered himself, professing that he did not know the high priest, who had commanded the smiting. The words—"I knew not that it was the high priest" contain an apparent difficulty. The Apostle, so well ac-

quainted with the customs of the council, must have known the high priest, both by the position he occupied and by the dress. Some have suggested that the Apostle was afflicted with a severe eye disease which blurred his vision. But this cannot be fully proven. The word "knew" seems to solve the difficulty. This word among the Jews has also the meaning "to acknowledge" or "to make recognition." For instance, it has that meaning in the exhortation "to know those who labor among you." Paul did not know the high priest may therefore mean that he did not want to acknowledge Ananias as the high priest, that he refused to recognize him as such. When Paul said he knew not that it was the high priest, he acknowledged his error he had made in refusing to recognize the president of the council by ignoring him. This seems to solve the difficulty.

The next utterance of the Apostle is still more strange. Once again he addresses the council as men and brethren. Then he cried "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." This is the third claim he makes and it shows how far he had drifted. He had claimed being a Jew, then had pleaded his Roman citizenship, and now before the council, he reminds them that he is a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee. Later from his Roman prison he wrote to the Philippians that he counted this all as dung. He had done so before. Here no doubt is a relapse. The reason which led him to do this was his knowledge that the Sanhedrim was composed of the two warring factions of Judaism, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. With his keen vision and knowledge of the conditions he saw the possible advantage of declaring himself a Pharisee. That might bring them to his side and end the difficulty in which he had become so seriously involved. Besides the confession that he is a prominent Pharisee, he stated the articles of the creed of the Pharisees which were so vigorously op-

posed by the Sadducees. He mentions "the hope" and "resurrection of the dead," which was really in question. This was a true statement. The hope is the Messianic hope of the coming of the Messiah. He had come in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and yet He is "the hope"; for He is coming again. The resurrection of the dead is closely connected with Christ and His coming. The Sadducees were the Rationalists, and denied, besides the existence of spirits, the Messianic hope and the resurrection of the dead. A great discussion arose between these two parties. A big commotion followed. Some of the scribes belonging to the Pharisees cried loudly in defence of the prisoner—"We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." The latter sentence was a faint echo of the advice given by Gamaliel. The scene which followed beggars description. The shouting must have been terrific and Paul was in danger of being pulled to pieces by the council mob. Lysias, the chief captain, was obliged to interfere. The soldiers, at his command, came down and rescued Paul and brought him into the castle. The cleverness of Paul had been the means of liberating him from the hands of the Sanhedrim.

II. The vision of the Lord (Verse 11).

> And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. (Verse 2.)

This is a most gracious and blessed fact, that now the Lord came into this scene of confusion and failure and in greatest tenderness to comfort and cheer His servant. One almost wishes it had pleased the Holy Ghost to give us a more detailed account of Paul in the castle that night and what took place. Two days had passed since the

arrest of Paul and they had been eventful days. His body was bruised and full of pain. But how he must have suffered in his spirit! All the warnings frequently uttered by the Spirit of God not to go up to Jerusalem came back to his mind. The failure of having not heeded these warnings must have weighed heavily upon him. And the disappointment he had suffered! It was burning love for his brethren which had led him to Jerusalem and now he had received the fullest evidence that they would not receive his testimony. Thinking of what he had done and failed must have greatly humbled the Apostle. And now he was a prisoner. His career in preaching the Gospel among the Gentiles and Jews had been cut short. No doubt left alone in the castle all these thoughts and others crowded in upon him. There he sought his Lord in Prayer. What a prayer it must have been Paul prayed in the castle! How the tears must have flown as he told the Lord all, confessing his failure and telling Him of his disappointment! And then, not an angel, but the Lord, stood by him that night. His loving arms were around His servant. He appeared to cheer him and assure him of His love.

There are three things especially to be noticed in the words of the Lord to Paul. He strengthened him by the encouraging word, "Be of good cheer." In the New Testament this comforting expression is exclusively used by our Lord. And what a meaning it has coming from His lips! "Be of good cheer." Disheartening were Paul's experiences, perplexing his situation, dark and mysterious his future, but the Lord bade him to be of good cheer. What strength must have filled the Apostle's heart as these words came to him! And we too can hear the words of cheer from our Lord in the midst of our difficulties and failures. He is the same to-day as he was then in that night. With such a Lord at our side we need never to despair.

Then the Lord spoke peace into his humbled breast and calmed all the feelings and questionings which had risen in Paul's mind. How little, Paul may have said to himself, I told the Jews about my Lord and the Gospel! My testimony was not as faithful as it should have been. But now the Lord tells him that he *had* testified of Him in Jerusalem. It is even stronger in the original: "thou hast borne full witness." What Grace is this! The Lord told him that he had after all borne witness of Him. He did not remind him of his mistakes, his faults, and how he might have avoided them, but He reminds him of his faithfulness. Such is our Lord in His gracious dealings with His servants. All his questionings were ended. He knew all was right between the Lord and himself and that he was under His gracious and loving care. And then the Lord assures him also of future service. He had not yet reached the end of his labors. "Thou must bear witness also at Rome." Rome then is his goal, which he has to reach as the prisoner of the Lord. How all this must have set him at rest! The Lord was with him and would bring him to Rome. And that Lord is with us and shall guide and provide for His servants. May our hearts be comforted and encouraged by Paul's experience during that night in the castle.

III. The conspiracy against Paul and its discovery.

And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to-morrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him; and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him. And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle,

and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him.* and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. So he took him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto *him,* and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him* aside privately and asked *him,* What is that thou hast to tell me? And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly. But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him, See thou* tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me. (Verses 12–22.)

The conspiracy against Paul reveals the condition of the nation. Jerusalem had indeed become a city of murderers (Isaiah i:21). More than forty had made a religious vow that they would kill Paul. The plan is laid and everything ready for its execution. But they had not reckoned with Paul's Lord. He was in His own hands and not in the hands of the Jews or the Gentiles, even as the life of all His servants rests in His omnipotent hand. The plot is discovered. A nephew of Paul was the chosen instrument. Paul's sister, of whom we have no other knowledge apart from this passage, must have been a person of influence, for the son heard of the secret council and had likewise access into the castle. The chief captain heard of the plot from the lips of the young man and was now deeply concerned about Paul and his safety. This was the result of the knowledge this chief officer had gained, that Paul was a Roman citizen. The record needs not further comment. What now follows is all under His control, who had promised Paul that he would have to witness in Rome for Him.

IV. Paul taken to Cesarea.

And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Cesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor. And he wrote a letter after this manner: Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix *sendeth* greeting. This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell. Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris. On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle. Who, when they came to Cesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia; I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall. (Verses 23–35.)

The prisoner of the Lord is now delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. A large force of soldiers accompanied Paul for his protection, while horses were also supplied to the Apostle. The danger was great, hence, the great precaution the chief officer, whose name is now mentioned, Claudius Lysias had taken. Could we have read in Paul's own heart we would have seen there the peace of Christ; the words of His Lord still resounded in that faithful and devoted heart—"Be of good cheer."

The letter of Claudius Lysias to the governor Felix is interesting. It shows how Lysias claims the full credit of having rescued Paul, because he was a Roman. He

declares him innocent, yet delivers him into the hands of the governor.

One would also like to know what had become of the forty conspirators. If they were true to their vow not to eat nor to drink till Paul had been killed, they must have starved to death, which, we are sure did not happen. Cesarea is reached in safety and Paul is delivered into the hands of the governor, who promised him a hearing as soon as the accusers would arrive. Jerusalem now laid forever behind him. Rome was before him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The account of the trial of the Apostle Paul before the Governor Felix and how this trial terminated is reported in this chapter.

I. The indictment of Paul (Verses 1–9).
II. The defence of the Apostle (Verses 10–21).
III. How Felix disposed of the case (Verses 22–23).
IV. Paul addresses Felix (Verses 24–27).

I. The indictment of Paul.

And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders and *with* a certain orator *named* Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse *him*, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence. We accept *it* always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. For we have found this man *a* pestilent *fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took and would have judged according to our law. But the chief captain Lysias came *upon us*, and with great violence took *him* away out of our hands. Commanding his accusers to come unto thee; by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so. (Verses 1–9.)

If the Jews, after Paul's removal from Jerusalem, had not pressed the case against him, he would have been liberated. As he had gone years ago to Damsacus to perse-

cute the Christians there, so now the Jews follow him to Cesarea to accuse him before the Roman governor. They evidently did not lose any time. Only a few days had elapsed when a strong deputation from Jerusalem appeared in Cesarea. The high priest filled with much hatred against Paul had taken it upon himself to come in person. This must have been an unusual occurrence for a person of Ananias' standing to leave Jerusalem. He came not alone but brought with him the elders and a professional Roman lawyer Tertullus. No doubt the scheme of indictment was cleverly laid and the high priest must have counted much on his personal presence and on the eloquence of the hired lawyer. God was left out completely.

The address of Tertullus is characteristically Roman. He pays a flattering tribute to Felix, which however fell on barren ground. That official knew well the hollowness of these compliments. The words Tertullus used against the great man of God are extremely vile and manifest the hiss of the serpent. He calls him "a pestilent fellow," a person of whom society may well be rid of. The indictment contains three counts. First stands a political accusation. This, in presence of the high Roman officer, was of the greatest importance. Any conspiracy against the Roman government was a capital offence. The charge of sedition or treason was thus at once laid at the door of the Apostle. The second offence Tertullus brought against Paul was of a religious nature. As ringleader of the Nazarenes, presented by him as a sect of the Jews, he had abetted that which was against the peace of Judaism and introduced not alone a disturbing element, but had transgressed another Roman law, which forbade the introduction of unrecognized religious sects. The third charge was the profanation of the temple. If this last charge could have been proven against Paul the sentence of death would have fallen against him.

The address of Tertullus is most likely not reported in full. There is a difficulty about the words "and would have judged according to our law, but the chief captain Lysias came upon us and with great violence took him away out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come unto thee." In some of the oldest manuscripts these words are not found; in the manuscripts in which they are found variations occur. The critical school has ruled them out. The chief reason given besides the textual difficulty is because the Jews would not have accused Lysias. We believe the words are genuine and that they belong in the text. If they are omitted the words "by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him" must be applied to Paul. But that was against Roman customs that the judge should be referred to the prisoner. If they are not omitted then Tertullus meant that Lysias should himself be examined. Verse 22 settles the difficulty. Felix said that he would delay his decision till Lysias would arrive.

When Tertullus had completed his speech, the Jews, Ananias and his elders fully endorsed the statements of their lawyer.

II. The defence of the Apostle.

Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the

dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and *toward* men. Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me. Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evil doing in me while I stood before the council, Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day. (Verses 10–21.)

For the third time in the history of this book, Paul addresses a Roman officer of high rank, Gallio and Sergius Paulus were the others. His defence is masterly. The Spirit of God helped him now as he faced his cunning accusers and his judge. No flattery is used by him. Any kind of flattery is unworthy of a Christian. The flattering tongue is the serpent's tongue. "A flattering mouth worketh ruin" (Prov. xxvi:28). "A man that flattereth with his tongue spreadeth a net for his feet" (Prov. xxix:5). "The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips" (Psalm xii:3). Paul only refers to the fact that Felix was a judge appointed over the nation for many years. His innocence is apparent in the cheerful manner in which he begins his defence. His address contains a denial of the first charge; a confession and admission concerning the second, and a complete vindication of the accusation of the temple profanation.

He points first of all to the fact that only twelve days had elapsed since his arrival in Jerusalem and that he did not go there to cause an insurrection against the Roman authorities, but to worship. He did not congregate a crowd. He did not dispute openly (as Stephen did) nor did he incite the Jews in the synagogues or in the city to rebellion. Boldly he asserts that they have no proof whatever against him as a political offender.

But it was different with the second count of Tertullus'

indictment. Here he admits the fact that "the way" which they call heresy, faith in Christ, is his way of worshipping the God of his fathers. But this way did not change his belief in the law and the prophets, as the accusation might have implied. Then he speaks of hope toward God, the resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust. He also testifies of his own life and walk as a believer in the way in which he served God. He had used self-discipline to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men. The great truth he held and for which he had been imprisoned, resulted in a righteous life. In a brief word, he speaks of his own love for the nation, and states one of the purposes of his visit to Jerusalem to bring alms and offerings to his nation. How simple, yet masterly, all this was put.

But the last charge had to be refuted. The falsity of what Tertullus had accused him he proves in a few well-chosen words. He had been in the temple, but not to profane it. There was no multitude; there was no tumult from his side. No witnesses were present to substantiate the charge of the profanation of the temple. He even appealed to Ananias and the elders to speak if any evil had been found in him when he had appeared before the Council. He readily owns the statement he had made touching resurrection, the words which precipitated the riot. He had proven the injustice of the charges and by his honest admissions demonstrated his innocence.

III. How Felix disposed of the case.

> And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that* way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter. And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul and to let *him* have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him. (Verses 22–23.)

Felix had more perfect knowledge of the way. He was acquainted with the truths concerning Christ and with Christianity, though he himself was not walking in the way. He knew that the accusations were not true. He refuses a decision. Justice demanded that Paul should be set at liberty. However, Felix defers it all to the time when Lysias, the chief captain, came to Cesarea. But Lysias never showed up. Paul was kept a prisoner. A second hearing before Felix he never received; but Felix heard Paul, as we read in the concluding paragraph of this chapter.

IV. Paul addresses Felix.

> And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But, after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound. (Verses 24–27.)

Felix was married three times. His wife, Drusilla, mentioned here, was a daughter of Herod, that is Agrippa I, who slew James. Drusilla's brother was the Agrippa mentioned in the twenty-sixth chapter of our book. Drusilla had been married to the King of Emesa. She had abandoned him for Felix, and was at that time not yet 20 years old. According to some authorities it was she who expressed the desire to hear the Apostle speak concerning the faith of Christ. No doubt it was mere curiosity, if not to ridicule the servant of the Lord. Where the audience took place is not stated.

Paul knew undoubtedly Felix and Drusilla's history. The prisoner becomes judge. Instead of satisfying their curi-

osity, he speaks boldly truths concerning righteousness, temperance and judgment to come which uncovered the wicked doings of the pair and touched the conscience of Felix. He trembled as he saw his heart laid bare and got a glimpse of judgment to come. He refused the solemn message and therefore Paul could not present to him the blessed Gospel.

The address of Paul was not completed. Felix broke it off and dismissed the preacher with that familiar excuse, which has led countless souls to eternal ruin, "when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." He did send often for him and communed with him, but it was not to learn the way of life. He expected a bribe from Paul so that he might purchase his liberty. The Apostle remained a prisoner in Cesarea for two years. No doubt during this time he enjoyed the fellowship of the saints. Besides Luke, Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with Paul. We doubt not with the liberty granted unto the Apostle he had many opportunities to minister the Word. Perhaps it was during these two years that Luke, the beloved physician, was moved to write the Gospel record which bears his name and which was addressed to Theophilus.

Felix left Paul behind as prisoner, thinking to show the Jews a favor. Porcius Festus became governor in the place of Felix.

CHAPTER XXV.

Over two years before the history contained in the present chapter transpired, the Lord had spoken to Paul during that memorable night in the castle Antonia, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also in Rome." In this chapter we approach the end of this book. Paul appealed to Caesar, and the new governor answered him, "Unto Caesar shalt thou go." After his great speech before King Agrippa, we have the record of the journey, the shipwreck and his arrival in Rome and his presence there. With this the great historical book of the Acts closes.

I. Festus and the Jews. Paul appeals to Caesar.
II. King Agrippa visits Festus (Verses 13–22).
III. Paul brought before the King (Verses 23–27).

I. Festus and the Jews. Paul appeals to Caesar.

Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Cesarea to Jerusalem. Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him. And desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly *thither*. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with *me*, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Cesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. While he answered for himself, neither against the law of the Jews, neither

against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all. But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go. (Verses 1–12.)

The new governor, Festus, had arrived at Cesarea, and then went up to Jerusalem, the capital of the province. The Jews had not forgotten Paul, though they had not attempted another accusation before Felix, knowing that the case was hopeless. But they made at once an effort with the new governor. No sooner had this official made his appearance in Jerusalem, but the high priest and the chief of the Jews made a report about Paul. Most likely Festus had not even heard of Paul up to that time. Ananias was no longer high priest; Ishmael Ben Phabi had taken the office. What really took place in Jerusalem, Festus later relates to Agrippa. When Paul was presented to Agrippa, Festus introduced him by saying, "Ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer" (verse 24). A scene of tumult must have been enacted in Jerusalem when Festus showed himself. The mob clamored for the life of Paul. When they noticed the reluctance of the governor, they concocted another plan. They requested that Paul should be brought to Jerusalem. On the way there they intended to murder him.

Why did not Festus fall in line with this suggestion? When he saw Paul face to face he asked him the question if he would go up to Jerusalem to be judged there. Why

then did he not consent to the proposal of the Jews? He knew nothing of the murderous plot against Paul. It was God who kept him from granting the desire of the Jews. That eye which neither sleeps nor slumbers kept watch over Paul as it still does over every child of God. Festus demanded instead that some Jews should come to Cesarea and accuse Paul and he would hear the case. After he had tarried in Jerusalem for over ten days, he returned to Cesarea. Paul then appeared before him for trial and the Jews were there from Jerusalem. But it was a wild scene again. They brought many and grievous complaints against Paul, but they could not prove anything. This failure must have been the source of much excitement. It was then that the same scene which took place in Jerusalem was gone through once more. They cried out that he should not live any longer (verse 24).

But how calm the Apostle stands in the midst of that scene of turmoil. His words are brief and positive. "Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar have I offended anything at all." This shows that the same accusations were brought against him.

Festus remembered the former request of the Jews to have Paul in Jerusalem. To please them he asked Paul if he would go to Jerusalem. He refuses to be delivered unto them. If he is an offender, he is ready to die. Then it was when he appealed unto Caesar. Did he do wrong? Certainly not. He knew the Lord's will that he had to testify in Rome. Rome was the goal before him. He acted in this according to the will of God. Festus and Agrippa later declared that he might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar. It was not lack of faith Paul exhibited in appealing to Caesar, but an evidence of faith and submission to the will of the Lord. Festus held a meeting with his council and declared, "Unto Caesar thou shalt go."

II. King Agrippa visits Festus.

And after certain days King Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cesarea to salute Festus. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring *to have* judgment against him. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow, I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked *him* whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cesar. Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To-morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. (Verses 13–22.)

Agrippa and Bernice paid a visit to the new governor. The father of this king was known as Herod Agrippa and died under awful circumstances (Chapter xii) in the year 44. When his father died Agrippa was in Rome. He was too young to receive the kingdom of his father Herod. Eight years later, Herod, King of Chalcis, the uncle of Agrippa, died. He had married Agrippa's sister Bernice, and Caesar gave Chalcis to Agrippa. Later Agrippa received the title as king. Agrippa I had left three daughters besides this son—Bernice, Marianne and Drusilla, the wife of Felix. Bernice, who was the wife of her uncle, after his death joined her brother Agrippa in Rome. She married a Celician ruler, but deserted him and joined again her brother, in whose company she paid this visit to Cesarea.

The coming of King Agrippa solved the dilemma of Festus. He knew little of the case, yet he was expected to make in the so-called "letters demissory," a full statement of the case. Agrippa was a Jew and he was also thoroughly Roman, so that Festus could expect help from him in knowing the facts about his prisoner. After the visit had lasted many days, Festus lays the case of Paul before Agrippa. No further comment is needed on the words of Festus. He shows his ignorance as a Roman heathen of the Lord Jesus and His resurrection, when he calls this great event a Jewish superstition. Agrippa then expressed a desire to hear the man and Festus was only too willing to show this favor to the king.

III. Paul before the King.

> And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment, Paul was brought forth. And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and *also* here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him. (Verses 23–27.)

The presentation of Paul was made a state occasion. Agrippa and his wicked sister Bernice appeared in royal splendor and all the military and civic officials turned out. It must have been a splendid gathering which had come together in the audience chamber. After they had all entered and taken their places, the rattling of a chain was heard and Paul was led into the presence of the assembled

company. What a contrast! Perhaps they looked upon him with pity as they saw the chain. But more pity must have filled the heart of the great servant of Christ as he saw the poor lost souls bedecked with the miserable tinsel of earth. Festus addressed the King and the whole company. He frankly states what troubled him and that he expects the King to furnish the material for the statements he had, as governor, to send to Rome.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand and answered for himself." But his great address before the King is not so much a defence of himself; he speaks of the Lord and His gracious dealings with himself. The Lord's own words concerning Paul are again accomplished. "He is a chosen vessel with me to bear my name before Gentiles and Kings and the children of Israel" (ix:15). He bears now witness to His Name before a King.

I. The Address of the Apostle Paul (Verses 2–23).

II. The Interruption by Festus and the Appeal to the King (Verses 24–29).

III. The Verdict (Verses 30–32).

I. The Address of the Apostle Paul. This is no doubt the greatest of his addresses. It has several parts.

1. The Opening Words.

> I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. (Verses 2–3.)

These are gracious words. Even as he stands in chains the great Apostle counts himself happy. His happiness consisted in the knowledge that he was now privileged to bear witness of His Lord and the Gospel committed to him before such an audience. What an opportunity it was to him and how he rejoiced that he could speak of Him, whom he served. He also honored the King by a

brief remark, in which he expressed his delight in speaking before one who was so fully acquainted with Jewish customs and questions.

2. A Restatement of his Past Life as a Pharisee.

> My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jersualem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. (Verses 4–11.)

Similar statements we find in his first address as prisoner when he addressed the Jewish multitudes in the temple (Chapter xxii:3–5). Here, however, he enters more into the character of the accusation brought against him. He had lived conscientiously as a Pharisee. As such he had believed and trusted in the hope of the promise made of God unto the fathers. The twelve tribes, that is all Israel serving God instantly, expected the realization of this promised hope. This hope is the national one of the nation's future glory and blessing. But it centers in the Person of the Messiah, Christ. He is the hope of Israel, abundantly borne witness to by the Prophets of God,whose testimony concerning the future of Israel is always linked with the Holy One, the Redeemer, and His manifestation in the midst of Israel. Thus Paul establishes the fact that

he is one in hope and spirit with the nation in their expectation of the fulfilment of the promises of God. And on account of this hope, he told the King he was accused of the Jews.

At once he touches upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? The whole history of Israel bears witness to the fact, that God can bring life from the dead. The very origin of the nation demonstrates this, for Sarah's womb was a grave and God brought life out of that grave. Many promises of the past vouched for God's power to raise the dead. The nation had this promise that spiritual and national death is to give way to spiritual and national life (Ezek. xxxvii:1–15; Hosea vi:1–3). The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ proved Him to be the Holy One and the Hope of Israel. In this sense Peter speaks of His resurrection. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. i:3). The grave of the Lord Jesus was for the disciples the grave of their national hope, but His resurrection from the dead the revival of that hope.

Then once more the Apostle tells of how he persecuted the saints and did many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. It is the darkest picture he gives here of himself. He shut up the saints in prison, he voted their death, he punished them in synagogues, he compelled them to blaspheme, he raved against them and even persecuted them in strange cities. And upon that dark background he can now flash forth once more the story of his conversion.

3. The Heavenly Vision.

Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commis-

sion from the chief priests. At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee. (Verses 12–17.)

Once more, for the last time in this book, the record of his remarkable experience is given. As we have given an exposition of it before we need not enter into it again. The comparison of the different records will show that they are complementary and not contradictory as often claimed. He tells here especially of the quality of the light which burst from heaven upon him. It was above the brightness of the sun, the glory light of Him, whose members on earth he had persecuted. Some day the same glory will flash forth once more and that future manifestation of the Lord will mark the conversion of the nation. Paul's experience is a type of all this. Then he had received his divine commission. He was to be a minister and a witness of things he had seen and he were yet to see. The latter refer to the subsequent revelations he received from the Lord. But his special ministry was to the Gentiles "unto whom now I send thee."

4. The Gospel Message Declared.

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Verse 18.)

This may be looked upon as the center of the Apostle's

address. Now the proper moment had arrived to state the Gospel message before this company. It is a terse statement of the message which the Lord had committed unto him. All the elements of the Gospel are contained in this verse. There is first the condition of man by nature. Eyes, which are blind, in darkness, under the power of Satan. The eyes are to be opened and through the Gospel man is turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. In Colossians i:12 the same is stated. Then the blessings of conversion. Forgiveness of sins and an inheritance. Faith is the means of all this; sanctification, that is separation, in conversion "by faith that is in me." One wonders if the Holy Spirit even then did not bless the message to some heart and the Grace of God bestowed these blessings upon some believing sinners. It may have been so. The day will make it known

5. The Obedience to the Heavenly Vision.

> Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. (Verses 19–23.)

He had been obedient to the heavenly vision. How else could it be? His whole life was given up in service to Him, whose Glory he had seen, whose Grace had so wonderfully saved him. In verse 20 he sums up the untiring activity of his life and service. He tells King Agrippa in a brief sentence of the murderous attempt of the Jews. Furthermore he gives God the glory for having kept him

through the dark experience since his arrest so that he can continue his witnessing. All his teaching and preaching had been in agreement with the testimony of the Prophets. Christ should suffer, rise from the dead and blessing for the people (Jews) and the Gentiles should be the result.

II. The Interruption by Festus and the Appeal to the King.

> And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. (Verses 24–29.)

Festus, the Gentile, ignorant of much what Paul so blessedly declared and yet deeply impressed with the prisoner's eloquent enthusiasm, interrupted him. "Thou art beside thyself"—"much learning doth make thee mad." Thus the Lord himself had been charged (Mark iii:21; John x:20). Paul in a courteous answer tells the startled Festus that his words were not words of a mad man, but words of truth and soberness. The words of a Spirit guided and Spirit filled man are always such. Then Paul turns to the King and appeals to him. The Jewish King knew that the things he had declared were not inventions of a diseased brain but facts. The facts he had related had not taken place in some obscure corner. The King knew of the appearance of Christ, of His death and all the other related events. Perhaps the uneasiness of the King as the matter was directly put before him led to the bold

question of the prisoner. The one who was questioned concerning his life now turns questioner. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I knew that thou believest." The King was thus brought face to face with the important message. Decision is demanded. Could he, the Jewish King, in the presence of such an audience of Jews and Gentiles commit himself? I know that thou believest, was the declaration of the inspired messenger. He could not deny the fact that he did believe the prophets and he would not confess that he accepted the facts as stated by Paul and that he believed. It was a clever word by which he escaped the difficulty. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." The meaning is rather "by a little more persuasion you might make me a Christian." No doubt conviction had taken hold on him. In this half mocking way he answers the Apostle. How many after him have acted in the same way and rejected the Grace, which stood ready to save.

And then that great heart of the Apostle Paul, filled with divine, yearning love, bursts forth in a prayer for the convicted King and the whole company. "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." What a memorable event! Paul before Agrippa and divine love pleading through the prisoner of the Lord.

III. The Verdict.

> And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them. And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar. (Verses 30–32.)

The audience was over, for the King rose up and that

was the signal of the breaking up of the company, never to meet thus again. The verdict of a private consultation is "This Man doeth nothing worthy of death." Herod Agrippa said unto Festus "This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar." If Paul had not made his appeal to Caesar he might have then be freed. We have seen before that his appeal to Rome was according to the will of the Lord. To Rome then he goes. All is ordered by a gracious Lord.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The remarkable book now draws to its close. The journey towards Rome and the Apostle's presence in Rome as a prisoner brings us to the end of the record. Shipwreck and the chief actor of the greater part of this book in a prison conclude the story of the beginnings of the church on earth. Behind the historical account one may easily see the stormy voyage of the professing church; her adversities, tossing about and shipwreck. However, such an application needs caution. It is easy to step into fanciful and far-fetched allegorical teaching. Besides church history other applications have been made of this narrative. A commentator claims that the keynote to the interpretation is given in verse 34 in the word *salvation.* "This and cognate words occur seven times in the chapter: *Hope to be saved; ye cannot be saved; to be completely saved.* While the contrary fate is no less richly depicted—*injury, loss, throwing away, perish, kill* and *to be cast away.* The history, then, is a parable of the great salvation, by which man is brought through death to life." We shall not attempt to seek for an outline of church history in the events of this chapter. Here and there we shall touch upon a few lessons suggested by the account of the voyage. The central figure, the prisoner of the Lord, shall occupy us more than anything else. It is said that in all the classical literature there is nothing found which gives so much information of the working of an ancient ship as this chapter does. Even the critics have acknowledged that this chapter "bears the most indisputable marks of authenticity." "Historical research and inscriptions have confirmed the facts given in this chapter, while the accuracy of Luke's

nautical observations is shown by the great help he has given to our understanding of ancient seamanship. None have impunged the correctness of his phrases; on the contrary, from his description contained in a few sentences, the scene of the wreck has been identified."* The whole account is most clearly proven by a work of wide research on "The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul," by James Smith.

We follow then briefly the different stages of the Apostle's journey towards Rome.

I. From Cesarea to Fair Havens (Verses 1–8).

II. The Unheeded Warning. The Storm. Paul's Vision and Assurance of Safety (Verses 9–26).

III. The Shipwreck (Verses 27–44).

I. From Cesarea to Fair Havens.

> And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto *one* named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; *one* Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave *him* liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself. And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia. And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein. And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone; And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city *of* Lasea. (Verses 1–8.)

Some time must have elapsed after the memorable speech

*Richard B. Rackham on Acts.

before Agrippa and the beginning of the journey. Perhaps the certain other prisoners had first to be gathered and then Paul with the others were delivered to a centurion of Augustus' band, named Julius. The great Apostle with all the wealth of divine revelation is now in custody of a Roman officer. From the second verse we learn that besides the beloved physician and inspired author of this book, Luke, Aristarchus was also on board. In chapter xxi:18 we learned that he was then also with the Apostle. Later in writing from Rome Paul calls Aristarchus, his fellow prisoner (Col. ii:10), which however, does not necessarily mean that he was carried along as a prisoner. Had he been arrested with the Apostle as some have stated, surmising that he was with Paul in the temple, when the mob fell on him, then surely some statements to that effect would have been made before. Julius treated Paul with much leniency. He knew of course the verdict given by Herod Agrippa, that he was not guilty and might have been a free man had he not appealed to Caesar. At Sidon, where they landed, Paul is permitted to visit his friends and to refresh himself. Most likely Paul was in a physically weakened condition so that Julius entreated him to leave the ship. The Lord's gracious and loving care for His faithful servant shines out in this. How clearly the whole narrative shows that all is in His hands: officers, winds and waves, all circumstances, are under His control. So far all seemed to go well; but contrary winds now trouble the voyagers. The ship is tossed to and fro. If we look upon the ship as a type of the professing church and the little company, headed by Paul, as the true church, then there is no difficulty in seeing the issue. Winds which drive hither and thither trouble those who hold the truth and live in fellowship with the Lord, while the professing church is cast about. Then Myra was reached. Here they took a ship of Alexandria. The expositors who at-

tempt to trace the history of the church in the account see much in this statement. They tell us that it is typical of the professing church's more direct course towards Rome. These different typical applications are often forced. After sailing slowly many days they reached a place called "the fair havens." Then they reached the island of Crete. The place Lasea has been geographically located. But the name of the port was deceptive. "The fair havens" were far from peace and rest, but the place was exposed to the blasts of the winds. There are no fair havens of peace in this present evil age. The fair havens will only be reached when the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

II. The Unheeded Warning. The Storm. Paul's Vision and Assurance of Safety.

Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished *them*, And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, *and there* to winter; *which is* an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west. And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* purpose, loosing *thence*, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let *her* drive. And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat; Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next *day* they lightened the ship; And the third *day* we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on *us*, all hope

that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sailed with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. (Verses 9–26.)

The late fall had been reached and navigation was then considered a hazardous thing. Nautical instruments were unknown, and other imperfect knowledge was a great drawback to navigation at that time. Little sea trading was done during the late fall and less during the winter months. They waited till sailing had become dangerous.

The fast mentioned which had passed was that of the Day of Atonement. Could we conclude from this statement that Paul and his companions kept the Day of Atonement by fasting? Some believe this, and that the Apostle continued in all the observances of the ceremonial law and even the traditions of the elders. This is incorrect. It was customary to remember these different feasts and holidays simply for the sake of marking time. In this sense it is mentioned here. Most likely a consultation of the commander of the ship and the owner, who was on board, and the centurion, was held, and Paul was present. He gives them a solemn warning and cautions them to beware. This shows his close fellowship with the Lord. In prayer, no doubt, he had laid the whole matter before the Lord and received the answer, which he communicates to the persons in authority. They looked upon it as a mere guess and the centurion rather trusted in the judgment of the captain and the owner.

And here we can think of other warnings given through the great Apostle. Warnings concerning the spiritual dangers, the apostasy of the last days, the perilous times, warnings against the seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. The professing church has forgotten these divinely-given predictions. The world does not heed them. Like these mariners, who believed in their own wisdom and disregarded the warning given, Christendom has paid no attention to these warnings. For this reason the ship is drifting, cast about by every wind of doctrine and rapidly nearing the long-predicted shipwreck.

Their aim was to reach Phenice, another haven of Crete, to put up for the winter. All went well for a time, but suddenly a terrific tempest arose. The hurricane which struck them was known by the name of Euroclydon. The ship was caught in the high seas and driven by the gale. A small island, Clauda, afforded a little shelter. A smaller boat was trailing behind and was now lifted on board. Helps had to be used to undergird the ship and keep it from going to pieces. Still greater danger was ahead. Large sandbanks were nearby. To prevent the stranding they took in the sail and were once more driven by the wind. All this reminds us of the many endeavors from the side of man to keep professing Christendom together. The power gone, because disobedient to the Lord and His word, things are drifting and all kinds of worldly means and helps are employed to keep from sinking. Paul and his companions were conscious of the fact that they were in the hands of the Lord, who made the sea and at whose command the waves and the wind must obey.

Their trouble had just begun. The next day a part of the cargo was cast from the ship to make it lighter. The third day the tackling of the ship followed. The wheat they still kept, for they had need of it. Later even that went (verse 38). Sun and stars were hidden for many days;

in despair, they abandoned all hope of salvation. Here we may think of the Satanic influences and power, typified by the continued wind, and of the periods of church history when indeed the sun and stars were hidden, when all testimony to Christ and testimony from the side of His people seemed to have ceased.

When despair had reached its heights, Paul appears once more upon the scene. When all was hopeless the prisoner of the Lord spoke the words of hope and cheer. He reminds them first of their refusal and disobedience. What had came upon them was the result of having not heeded the warning. He then assures them that an angel of God had assured him once more that he would have to stand before Caesar; but God had given to him all that sail with him. Only the ship is to go down, the lives of all who sail with him will be preserved. "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken unto me." And now they were willing to listen to him. They had to acknowledge their disobedience and believe the message of cheer as it came from the divinely instructed messenger, assuring them of their ultimate salvation.

And so, at least, in part, drifting Christendom can listen to the Apostle Paul, and if the mistake, the wrong course, is acknowledged, the heavenly-sent message is accepted, salvation is assured.

II. The Shipwreck.

But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; And sounded and found *it* twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found *it* fifteen fathoms. Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat

into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat; for this is for your health: for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat. And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea. And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship. And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast *themselves* first *into the sea*, and get to land: And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land (Verses 27–44.)

How calm the Apostle and his companions must have been after this assurance of their safety. The dreadful wind might continue and the ship drift still further. They knew they were safe, for God had spoken. Different it was with the crew of the ship. In great distress they feared the coming disaster and cast out four anchors. The shipmen attempted flight by a clever scheme. Paul discovered their plan and said to the Centurion and soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye (not *we*) cannot be saved." God had

given him all who were in the ship. The work of the sailors was needed when the daybreak came. And the soldiers believed the word of Paul, for they cut the ropes, which set the boat adrift the sailors tried to use. Then Paul exhorted them to eat. Once more he assured them that not a hair should fall from the head of any one. Before the whole company, two hundred and seventy-six persons, Paul took bread and gave thanks to God. The Lord had exalted the prisoner and he really stands out as the leader of the distressed company. They all became encouraged by the words and action. All has its lessons. However the meal has nothing to do with the Lord's Supper. It tells us typically how necessary it is that we must feed on the bread of life in the days of danger, the times when everything breaks up.

The details of the account we do not need to follow. The soldiers suggested the killing of the prisoners. The soldiers were responsible for every prisoner with their lives. If some were to escape they would be killed for the neglect. So for this selfish reason they would have killed each prisoner. The Centurion kept them from carrying out this evil purpose. And when the ship went to pieces all escaped safe to land. God was faithful to His promise. God saved, though the ship went into pieces. Even so God is faithful to His promise and all who trust in His ever-blessed Son are saved and safe, and none of them can be lost. The ship, professing Christendom, is breaking up and the ship cannot save.

The story of the journey towards Rome and the shipwreck reveals the acts of the adversary once more. No doubt he would have prevented the Apostle from reaching Rome in fulfillment of the Lord's word and plan. The last attempt was through the soldiers. But none can frustrate God's purposes. Happy are we if we learn that all rests in His hands whose love will never fail and whose power can never diminish. The winds of trial and adversity,

the schemes of man and assaults of the enemy must help together in the fulfillment of His own councils. Yea, all things must work together for good to them that love God. The next chapter brings us to the end of the journey and to Rome itself.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The final stage of the journey to Rome, the Apostle's arrival there and a brief account of how he called the Jews together in a meeting and delivered them an important message, form the ending of this book.

I. In the Island of Melita (Verses 1–10).
II. The arrival in Rome (Verses 11–16).
III. Paul calling the chief of the Jews and his message (Verses 17–29).
IV. The Apostle's activity in Rome (Verses 30–31).

I. In the Island of Melita.

And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance sufferеth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed. Who also honoured us with many honours; and when

we departed, they laded *us* with such things as were necessary. (Verses 1–10.)

Melita, which means "honey," is the island of Malta. It was even then a prominent place for navigation where many vessels wintered. Luke calls the inhabitants Barbarians, a term used by the Greeks for all peoples who did not speak their language. The wrecked company was not plundered by the people of the island, but instead received much kindness and were made comfortable in the cold rain which fell. Those who apply all this in an allegorical way, find much meaning in this.*

It was God who moved the hearts of these islanders to show such hospitality to the shipwrecked company for the sake of His servants. Paul is active even then. The shipwreck and privations must have told on the great man of God physically, yet we see him going about gathering a bundle of sticks for the fire. This labor must have been difficult, since as a prisoner he wore a chain on his hands. A viper, which had been benumbed by the cold and revived by the heat of the fire, fastened on his hand. The serpent did him no harm and he cast it into the fire, where it found a miserable end. We doubt not it was a poisonous viper. This is denied by some critics on the plea that poisonous snakes are not found in the island of Malta. However, that is no proof that such did not exist at that time. The inhabitants of the island expected Paul to fall dead. If it had been a harmless snake, why such an expectation? God's

*The shipwreck is often applied allegorically to the wrecking of Christianity by the world under Constantine the Great and in the name of Melita (Honey) they see an indication that the professing church supposed then to have reached "the land which flows with milk and honey." But so many other allegorical meanings, many of them forced, are made, that we do not consider such applications at all. The primary meaning of the account is to give us the history of how Paul reached Rome.

power was manifested in his behalf; it was unquestionably a fulfillment of the promise in Mark xvi:18, "they shall take up serpents . . . and it shall not hurt them." How Satan tried to hinder Paul from reaching Rome; how he attempted to oppose God's will and God's plan! By the murderous Jews, by the storms of the sea, the suggestion of the soldiers to kill the prisoners, and now by the viper Satan tried to frustrate the Lord's plan. But God kept His servant and no harm could come to him. In the same keeping all His people rest. We are safe under Him, our omnipotent Lord.

The viper which fastened on Paul's hand reminds us of Satan, that old serpent. He is a conquered enemy. He attacks us, he will fasten on us wherever he can; we are told to resist the devil and he will have to flee from us. In a believing, conscious union with Christ, all his attacks will prove harmless, till at last Satan shall be bruised under our feet and the serpent will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Then there was a manifestation of the gracious power of the Lord towards the inhabitants of the island. Publius, the chief man of the island, had shown also much kindness to the apostle and his companions. The father of Publius was severely sick; Paul visited him and after prayer and the laying on of hands he was healed. As this became known, others who were afflicted with diseases came and were healed. The Lord honored His servant and did good to those, who had shown kindness to His own. Along with the healing of diseases, the Apostle must have preached the blessed Gospel.

II. The Arrival in Rome.

And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. And landing at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days. And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after

one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome. And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum, and the Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him. (Verses 11–16.)

Three months had gone by—the winter months, during which navigation was at a standstill. An Alexandrian vessel, which had wintered in the safe harbor of Melita, carried the company towards their destination, Puteoli, the harbor of Rome. This was in the early part of Spring. After landing at Syracuse (Sicily), and tarrying there for three days, they reached Rhegium, in the straits of Messina, and the next day they came to Puteoli, in the Bay of Naples, almost one hundred and forty miles from the city of Rome. In Puteoli, where a large Jewish colony was situated, they found brethren, who entreated them to stop with them for a week. What an oasis of blessing this must have been for the wearied and tired servants of the Lord! One would almost wish it would have pleased the Holy Spirit to give us a fuller account of the blessed fellowship they must have enjoyed together. And so they came to Rome. The brethren in Rome knew in some way of their coming. They came to meet them as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns. Most likely two different companies of brethren are indicated. The first company met them at Appii Forum, some forty miles from Rome, and the second company at the Three Taverns, some ten miles further on. The news of the Apostle's coming must have been conveyed to Rome from Puteoli. Perhaps the two companies represented the Jewish believers and the Gentile Christians, of which the church in Rome was composed. With what anticipation they must have looked forward to seeing the Apostle, whose face they had never seen.

His blessed epistle addressed to the Saints of God in Rome, the Beloved of God, had been in their possession for a number of years and had brought untold blessings to their souls. How often they must have read his words, in the beginning of his letter: "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now, I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that ofttimes I proposed to come unto you (but was hindered hitherto), that I might have some fruit among you also, even as the rest of the Gentiles" (Rom. i:11–13). He had never been in Rome. The Roman assembly was not founded by Paul and certainly not by Peter. The origin of that church is obscure and the Holy Spirit has not given us a history of the beginning of the church in Rome. And now he whom they all loved, whose face they longed to see, was actually on the way to visit Rome. But in a far different way did he come than he expected when he wrote his Epistle. He came as the prisoner of the Lord. What a meeting it must have been!

The record tells us that when Paul saw these beloved brethren, who had shown such love to him by meeting him on the way to accompany him to Rome, that he thanked God and took courage. It is evident that he must have been cast down and depressed in his spirit. How many questions must have been upon his mind! Perhaps anxiety concerning the assembly in Rome also weighed upon him He faced difficulties on all sides. But when he saw the brethren and the evidences of their love, the cloud passed and he thanked God and took courage. Anew he cast himself on the Lord, whose faithfulness and power had been so marked in his experience. There is no better way to meet all depression, anxious feeling, difficulties and obstacles, than the way of thanking God and taking courage,

which means, confidence in the Lord. After leaving the Three Taverns, the great Appian Way led them for thirty miles across the Campagna to the great city, the city of power, the mistress of the world, the city of the seven hills the mystical Babylon. In Rome at last. What emotions must have filled the hearts of Paul, Luke and Aristarchus when they entered Rome! It is written in Genesis xii:5, "and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came." They went forth to go to Rome and to Rome they came. The Lord had brought them safely to their destination.

Julius then delivered the prisoners to his official superior. But Paul is not in the hands of the Romans, but in the hands of the Lord. He guards him. He was permitted to dwell in his own house with a soldier alongside of him

III. Paul calling the chief of the Jews and his message.

And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together; and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men *and* brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans: Who, when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against *it*, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had aught to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you:* because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not

among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. (Verses 17–29.)

And now it is for the very last time in this book "to the Jew first." The first service the great Apostle rendered in Rome was not in the assembly, but he called the chief of the Jews together. He knew no bitterness in his heart against the Jews. In writing the letter to the Romans he had written, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also testifying with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. ix:1–2). "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is, that they might be saved" (x:1). And now, after all the sad experience he had made, the treatment he had received from his kinsmen, after he had found out their malice and deep hatred, the same love burns in his heart and the same yearning for their salvation possesses him. In Rome he manifests first of all his loving interest in his Jewish brethren. To these leading Jews he testified once more that he was innocent of any wrong doing. Briefly, he rehearsed his whole case and why he had been compelled to appeal to Caesar. For this purpose—to talk to them about this matter—he had called them. Then most likely he must have lifted his hands, from which the prisoner's chain dangled, and said, "because for the

hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." The Jews, however, wanted to hear more from his lips of—"what thou thinkest; for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." They knew he believed in Christ.

A great meeting took place a short time later. Many Jews assembled in Paul's lodging. The meeting lasted from morning till evening. Once more he testified the Kingdom of God to a large company of Jews. He also persuaded them concerning Jesus both out of the laws of Moses and out of the Prophets. What a wonderful message must have came from his lips as he unfolded the prophetic testimony concerning the Messiah in the power of the Spirit of God! But what was the result? Some believed and some believed not. They did not agree amongst themselves. The end of God's gracious way with the Jews is reached. We repeat for the last time, it was to the Jew first. The final crisis is reached. Judgment must now be executed upon the nation and the blindness is now to come, which has lasted so long and will continue till the fullness of the Gentiles is come in (Rom. xi:26). Stephen, whose death young Saul had witnessed and approved (viii:1), had pronounced judgment upon the nation, in Jerusalem. God's mercy had still waited. Marvelous Grace, which took up the young Pharisee, Saul, and made him the Apostle to the Gentiles! Through him, the chosen instrument, the Lord still sought his beloved Israel, even after Jerusalem had so completely rejected the offered mercy. We have seen how the Apostle's intense love for his brethren had led him back to Jerusalem, though warned repeatedly by the Holy Spirit. And now he is used to give the very last message to the Jews and speak the final word of condemnation.

It is interesting to see how the Spirit of God quotes through the Apostle the message of judgment, which was

given to Isaiah over 700 years before. How long-suffering God is. What infinite patience and mercy He manifested in dealing with Israel. Isaiah had announced the hardening judgment, and God waited 700 years before it was finally accomplished. Twice before these words from Isaiah vi are mentioned in the New Testament. In Matthew xiii:14–15, they are spoken by our Lord after the people had rejected Him and the Pharisees had charged him with driving out the demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. They rejected Him, whom the Father had sent. Again, we find the Lord making use of these words at another occasion. In John xii:37–41, they are applied after the full rejection of the Son Himself and His testimony. Here in our passage they are used for the last time. The rejection is now complete and the result is the threatened blindness rests upon the nation. But we must not forget that the Spirit of God had announced all this in the Epistle to the Romans. The eleventh chapter unfolds the Jewish question and assures us that in spite of all this, the blindness of Israel is not permanent. God has not cast away this people, whom He foreknew. He will yet bring the remnant to Himself and forgive them their sins. God's gifts and calling are without repentance.

Paul then announced that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it. This marks the larger beginning of the world-wide proclamation of the Salvation of God among the Gentile races. And what a blessed description of the Gospel we have here, "the Salvation of God"! This still continues. God takes out from the Gentiles a people for His name. Blessed be God for the preaching of the Gospel in regions beyond, and for the blessed members which are added to His body, the church, in Korea, China, India and elsewhere. But the offer of the Salvation of God to the Gentiles will likewise close. Romans xi:18–22 contains the solemn message,

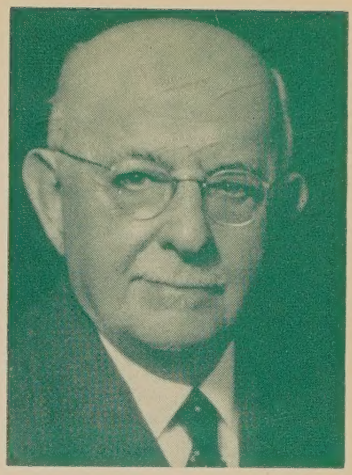
one of the great forgotten messages of the Bible. Boasting Gentile Christendom will some day be cut off and the broken off branches will be grafted in again into their good olive tree. The apostasy of Christendom, the wicked rejection of the Person of Christ, the constant and ever increasing perversion of the Gospel of God are sure signs that a change of dispensations is imminent.

IV. The Apostle's Activity in Rome.

> And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him. Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him. (Verses 30–31.)

A prisoner in Rome and yet active. He preached the Kingdom of God (not of heaven, the Jewish, earthly aspect of it), and ever speaking of that worthy name, that blessed and adorable Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. The ending of the book is sad and it is joyous. Sad to see the great Apostle a prisoner, shut up in Rome with his God-given Gospel. Joyous because the last verse mentions the Lord Jesus Christ and an unhindered ministry of the Gospel. The Book begins with Jerusalem and ends with Rome. It is a prophecy of the course of the professing church. The book closes in an unfinished way, because the acts of Christ, the Spirit of God, and Satan, recorded in this book, are not finished. We hear nothing more of Paul, though we know that from the prison the Holy Spirit of God sent forth through him the blessed Epistles, in which He has been pleased to give us the highest revelation. And how much more might be written on all this!

THE END.



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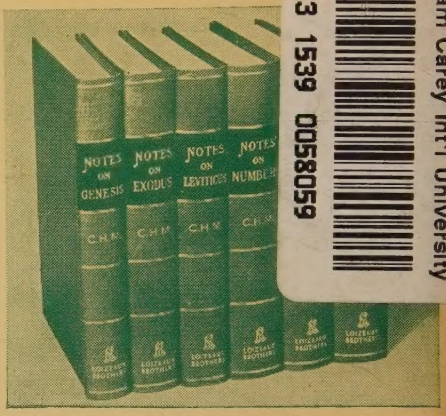

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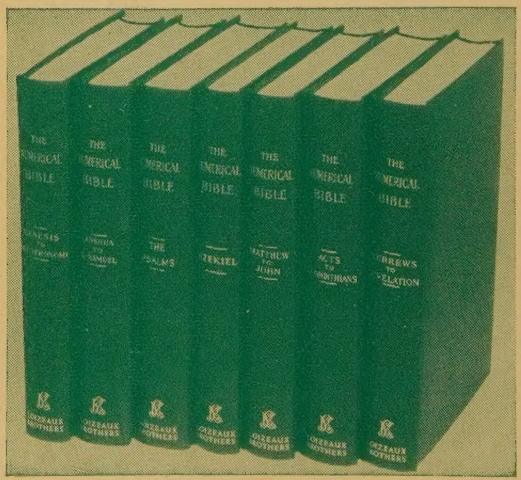

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